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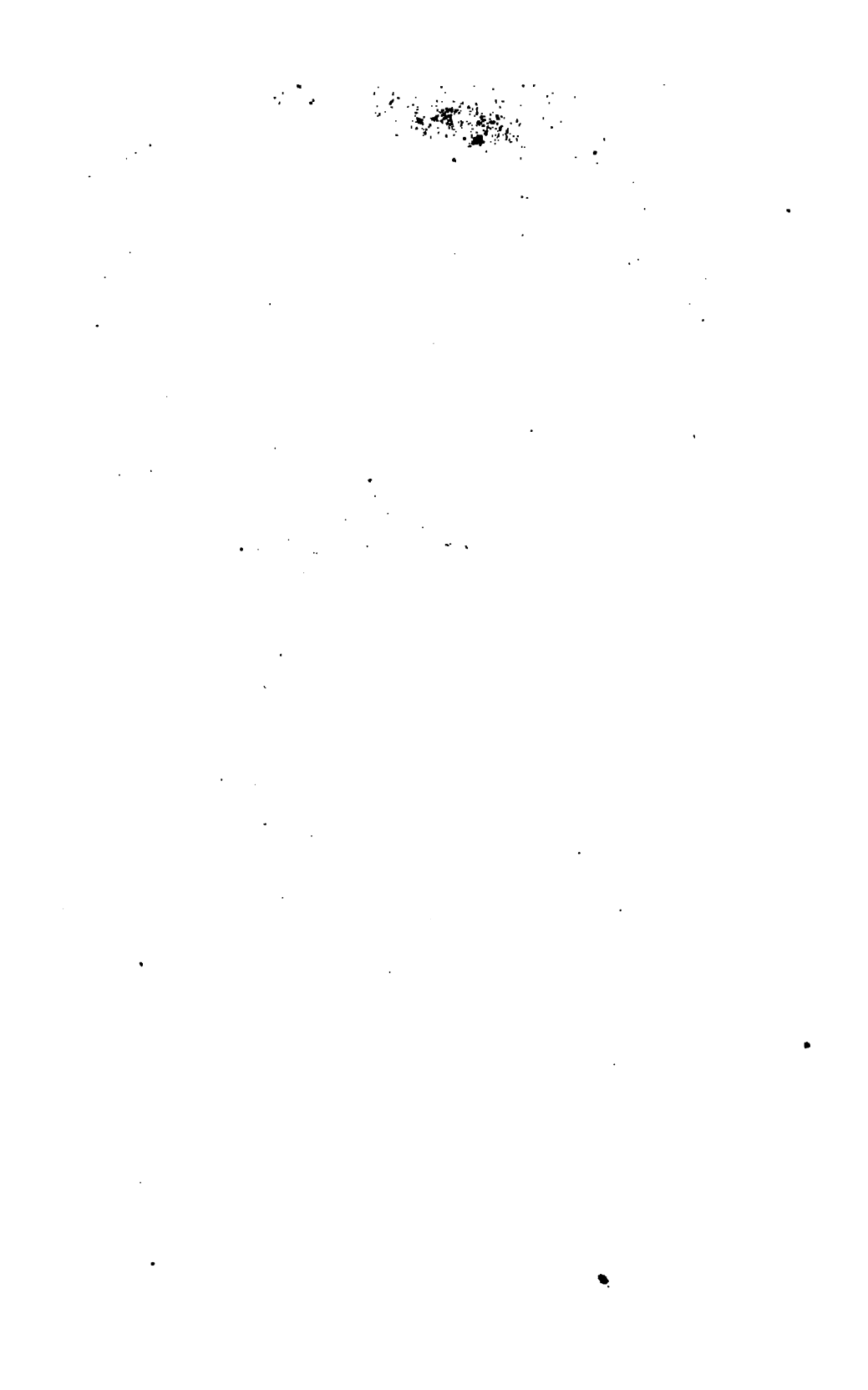
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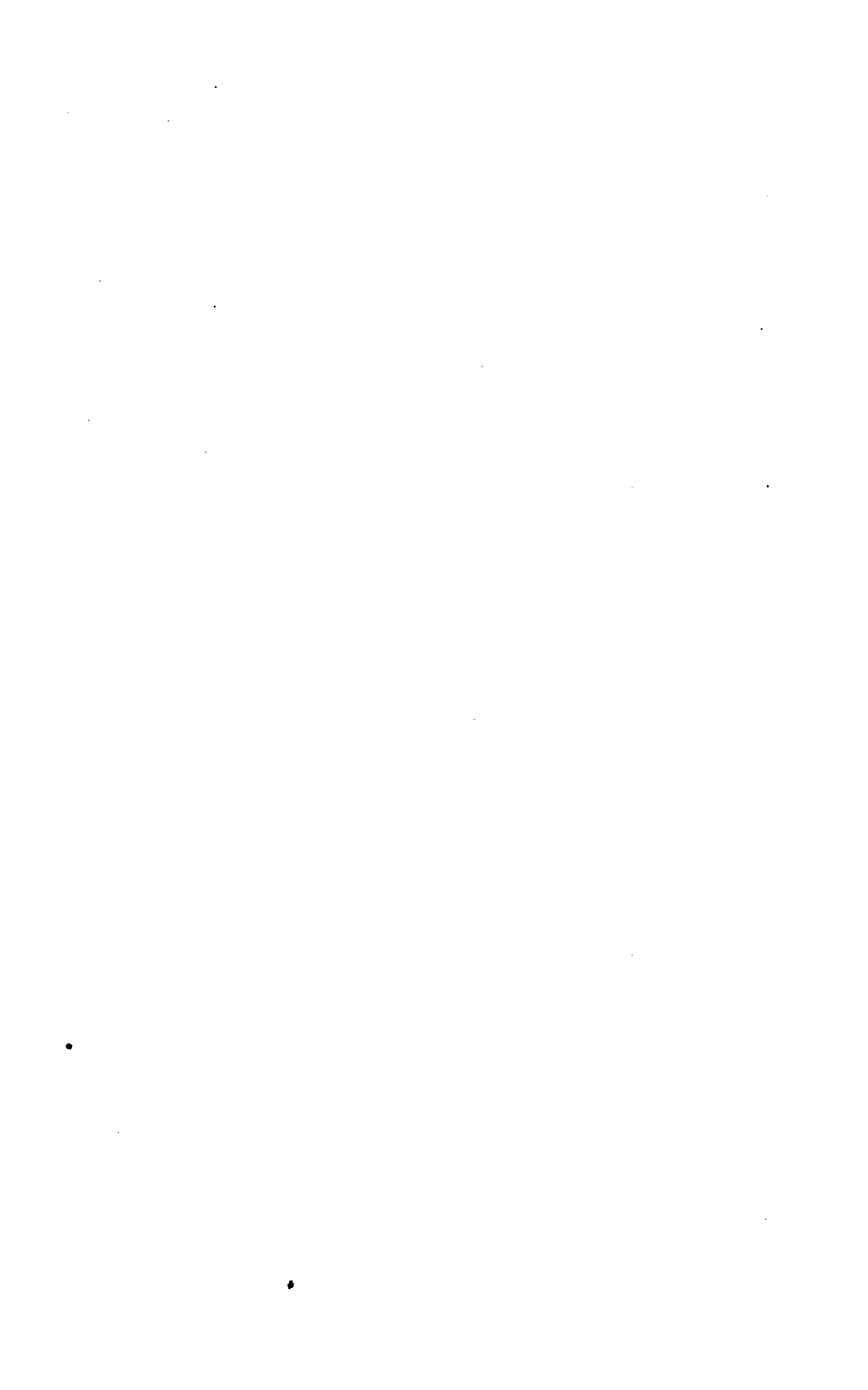
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ALL'S A DELUSION.

ALL'S A DELUSION:

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.



By _____

London :

JOHN OLLIVIER, 59, PALL-MALL;

AND

CHAPMAN, ELCOATE, AND COMPANY, 5, SHOE-LANE.

—
1847.

CHAPMAN, ELCOATE, AND COMPANY, 5, SHOE-LANE, AND PETERBOROUGH-
COURT, FLEET-STREET.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

LORD GAYTON.

LORD PYERS GAYTON, (*his Son.*)

LORD HOLLOW.

SIR FERNANDO FURNACE.

BLANDISH.

THORPE OF POGIS.

MALTHUS GLOOM.

DOCTOR BOLORAM.

MOBELS.

MUGGINS.

TOOL.

LADY GAYTON.

LADY FURNACE.

LADY HAVALL.

EDITH LE MERCHANT.

PHILLIS.

ALL'S A DELUSION.

ACT FIRST.

SCENE I.—DOCTOR BOLORAM'S HOUSE.

DOCTOR BOLORAM *and* TOOL.

DR. BOL. Tool, I say!

TOOL. Yes, grave Doctor.

DR. BOL. Dost listen?

TOOL. Yes, grave Doctor.

DR. BOL. Socrates of old used to be wrapt in meditation for four-and-twenty hours at a stretch, his venerable head unsheltered by a hat, barefooted, mute, and silent; he had a reason for it, for the ignorant rabble gazed upon him as a wonder.

TOOL. At that I don't wonder.

DR. BOL. Tool, simple Tool, thou art ignorant, that sagacious individual had an object, as deep and as impenetrable as the ocean.

TOOL. Not to all, profound Doctor; there is one who has discovered his object. Oh, Doctor, what a thing it is to be penetrating wise! Learning is as sharp as edge-tools, what goes through everything. Oh, profound Doctor, thou knowest all things.

DR. BOL. It is well; thou art apt. Now, what dost think his motive was?

TOOL. Verily I know not, except to get a very severe ague, or the fog in his throat, that should make him hoarser than any superannuated old jarvey, and deprive him of his speech for his born days; for doing of such a thing in this here enlightened age, a man would be considered at his wit's end—or rather, at the end of his wit—that is, when his senses had departed from him never more to return. He must have been doating mad, I assume, profound and learned Doctor.

DR. BOL. Unsophisticated nature, thou dost not perceive. Know, then, that I intend to do it—not in reality, for then, as thou sayest, I should be doating mad—but by thy word of mouth, Tool, I'll do it.

TOOL. By my word of mouth; how is that, grave Doctor?

DR. BOL. Simply, when the savans arrive and ask for me, point me out to them through the window; and when they ask thee how long I have been standing there, and the reason for it, prithee tell them eight-and-forty hours, in deep contemplation; that is just double the time it took Socrates to unravel his thoughts.

TOOL. But, grave Doctor, what is to become of the eating and drinking all that time, say nothing of warmth and firing?—it is fasting too long to be probable.

DR. BOL. The public are insatiable, nothing is too long for their credulity, they long to be gulled; besides, mesmeric influence supersedes food. Man may be taught to live without eating.

TOOL. They may be taught to believe it, but can they do so in reality?

DR. BÓL. No matter as to the reality, so they believe in it.

TOOL. Are you to be asleep or awake all that while?

DR. BOL. In an inspired trance, with intellectual visions floating before mine eyes, revealing to me the mysteries of Nature. But they come: I to the yard—[*Rapping*]*—*you to your office. You understand me, Tool?

TOOL. On a truth, yes, grave Doctor. [*Exit DR. BOL.*] Now smite the falsified of truth if this is not the novellest dodge practised on the credulity of a weak-minded public that ever I did see; I that have practised lying and deceit for a living all my life, I never before heard of such wamped up concoction. [*Rapping.*] Coming, misters. Why, it is delusion on delusion; if he should succeed in cramming this down the public gullet, then I am a blasphemer if it aint wide enough to take in a whale, and the public mind mad enough for Bedlam. It is a mixed question with me, if all the world ain't mad, only they don't know it, except me and the Doctor. [*Rapping.*] Wait a bit, and have patience, until I have swallowed my surprise at this last new dodge. [*Goes to the door.*] Now then, this way, savans—bright intellects of the age.

Enter Savans, LORD GAYTON, LORD HOLLOW, SIR FERNANDO FURNACE, GLOOM, MOBELS; LADIES GAYTON, HAVALL, and FURNACE.

ALL. Where is the Doctor?

TOOL. There, through yonder window, behold him. Just forty-eight hours gone by, he mesmerized himself; ever since then he has been in a spiritual trance. Behold him through the window, transfixed, like Socrates, meditating on thought. There, savans, is the man—the

typographical man—that bears on his mind the ponderous weight of all the reason of the age.

MOBELS. And pray what may the exact weight of the reason of the age be?

TOOL. No weight at all in the scales, only a type of intellect.

MOBELS. Miserable, unhappy man! What an affliction, to be incommoded by so much reason.

TOOL. Wherefore, learned savans?

GLOOM. What a mass of envy he must have brought on himself.

TOOL. See, see, he moves his eyes; look at his proud consciousness, he has solved the difficulties; the world, by-and-by, will be wiser—more wide awake, as the saying is.

MOBELS. You are very confident, young man.

TOOL. Confident! I don't repudiate that word; the world knows the Doctor, and what's more, I know him best of all; I have reason to know him, to my joy. The Doctor is wise—but he comes. Savans, behold the regenerator of mankind, the annihilator of old age, the greatest of mankind!

MOBELS. [*aside*] The most unblushing liar of any age.

DR. BOL. Welcome, most intellectual of men and women, the only ones of the age.

TOOL. [*aside*] The greatest dupes, I know.

DR. BOL. I have been in contemplation since we parted, my poor thoughts have not been idle.

LORD HOL. We have heard as much.

DR. BOL. What Tool has told you; but I must discover myself to you, lay bare the secrets of my thoughts; gratitude prompts me.

MOBELS. Do not, pray, for your own sake, or it will be all up with you ; don't let the juggle out.

DR. BOL. Man, you have my ineffable contempt.

MOBELS. I am glad of it ; it proves that I am useful to my fellow creatures, in not allowing them to be duped. The infliction of your hatred is a greater boon than your flattery.

DR. BOL. I say those that mistrust me can leave the house. I cannot instruct unbelievers.

MOBELS. For once most truly spoken.

DR. BOL. Truly spoken ! I always speak the truth.

MOBELS. Except when you do not, which is your rule, the other your exception.

DR. BOL. Avaunt, Maligner ! infidel unfit for this pure moral atmosphere ; I will not say I hate you, my soul's too great and magnanimous.

MOBELS. For all that you do hate me.

LORD HOL. Be charitable, Mr. Mobels, I am always charitable ; the world calls me the apostle of charity.

MOBELS. I know you are charitable with your tongue, good words are very cheap when they come empty handed. It is seldom, my Lord, you fathom your breeches pocket.

LORD HOL. And how should charity come ?

MOBELS. I'll tell you how, from good deeds—from the breeches pocket ; good words else are nought, it is unintelligible to poor suffering, shivering, a-hungred humanity. Give to industry her due, and she wants not that false sympathy which you call charity ; it is justice which industry demands, not alms giving ; still there are those who need your sympathy—poor, tottering, decrepit, impotent old age, the orphan, the blind, and the poor idiot. What are fine words to them ? If you want your

horse to be sleek, feed him. What are fine words to him? Even that most faithful animal the dog, when driven by hunger, will bite his master; fine words will not stay his ravenous appetite. Do justice, I say. To those who are strong, I say work—but pay them for it, not niggardly, but well; as they earn so let them glean; that is my doctrine.

GLOOM. That doctrine, Mr. Mobels, might do for those who have nothing to give, but it is too expensive for those who have.

LADY HAV. Good, Mr. Gloom, they shall have none of mine.

GLOOM. It is dreadful to think of, what the poor do consume of that which don't belong to them; if it was not for the poor-rates, I should be a better man by ten per cent.

MOBELS. And if it was not for those very poor you would not be worth a groat, all that you have has been begotten by their industrious hands; your food and raiment are alike the produce of their skill and labour.

LADY HAV. Hear the upstart! he, forsooth, has got rich from mean industry; thank Heaven none of my kindred ever laboured.

MOBELS. Thank Heaven they were your kindred, not mine; that they never did labour the greater their infamy. May the day arrive when idleness is considered infamy, and sloth branded as a thief, that robs the community of its wealth. Providence made hands that man might labour, and mind to direct those hands, and he who labours not purloins from the common stock, filches food from helpless old age; and the poor friendless, hapless orphan is stunted like the noble oak on a hungry soil for want

of proper nourishment. Industry and Justice are twin brothers ; they are the greatest of virtues, mightier than the mightiest heroes. I ask what would this land be without industry ? A blank spot in creation, a wilderness. It is industry that makes this island beautiful, a land of plenty—who, then, shall say they are privileged to live in idleness.

LADY HAV. Of course ; it is our privilege—ours, Mr. Mobels ; we are by birth privileged and entitled to live.

LORD HOL. Charity, charity—down with labour, labour's a bore.

GLOOM. How are we, miserable unhappy wretches that were born to misery, to do without labour.

DR. BOL. I have the means of doing away with all labour—make food grow spontaneous.

MOBELS. What, you would drug the people to death—murder mankind by wholesale ; how else, learned Doctor.

GLOOM. There is no occasion for that, death will come soon enough ; the world has not long to last, in two years it will be melted into air, and return to its primitive element.

MOBELS. If that is your opinion, give your substance to the poor ; let us make merry with your riches, and fill the world with merriment.

GLOOM. I hate merriment, it is sinful. If I had a cat that was frolicsome, I would scourge her to death, even if I was afterwards devoured by rats, and my substance all wasted by the vermin.

COUNTESS. Oh, monster ! hideous wretch ! am I to die ? I positively could not exist if I had not pleasure ; my whole happiness is in amusing myself.

LADY HAV. Mr. Gloom, am not I to have my fifth

husband? Two years is too short a time to enjoy a fifth; it will take five years on an average to wear out a stout young husband—who knows but I may have my sixth? Ah! who knows, Mr. Gloom? I don't believe you; and now I think on it, I beg leave to propose that no man is allowed to marry, without he marries a woman twice his own years. I would stop the filthy young husseys gratifying their natural feelings—ah, that I would.

COUNTESS GAY. I am positively shocked, Lady Havall, at a person of your age betraying so much the ardour of youth, it is shockingly indelicate.

LADY HAV. Ah, my Lord, you have helped yourself to a dainty morsel; have a care, I say, take warning by the receipts at Doctors' Commons.

LORD GAY. Lady Havall, do you mean to insult me?

LADY HAV. No, no, kinsman; only I would have you take care; beware of the fate of old husbands marrying young wives, that's all. I speak from experience; I once had an old husband, and I was then a young wife—that is all.

GLOOM. Disagreeable truths, that beget perplexities and doubts, that are extremely annoying—such is the frailty of nature. Never mind, I have not got at present a young wife; and if I had, and she did play me false, where would be the evil on it? It would only be the means of more certainly depriving my hungry relatives of their expectancies. My Lord, when a man marries, he must take the consequences.

LADY HAV. Of course he must; and if he is old enough to be her father, he must pocket it, too; that's what I told my dear old first husband, who in time became quite resigned to his fate; therefore I say, with

reason, let no man be allowed to marry without he marry a woman twice his own years, and then he may consider himself tolerably secure of his wife's fidelity.

GLOOM. An excellent idea, Lady Havall; I agree with you, prevent women marrying until forty or forty-five, it would considerably diminish the chance of an increase of population; my substance would then be more secure; I should then dread a famine less, and the world might then last a generation or two longer with safety. What dismay it would cause the young women—what consternation to the young men—despair would rivet them to the earth. After all there is a consolation, it would put a stop to the natural increase, and considerably diminish the chance of a famine.

COUNTESS. I am shocked at you two very old people, who, having lost all sense of the charms of existence, would deny it to others; living, you are really in the way. Why do you not both die, and make way for your relations; they, good creatures, must be very tired of you both living so long.

LORD HOL. I am inconceivably shocked; yet charity makes allowances.

LADY HAV. I leave you all, and if the law won't do me justice, I have that which will. Here--here—

DR. BOL. Stay, incomparable Lady Havall, I have something will satisfy you; you shall be reconciled.

LADY HAV. Doctor, you are a man of sense—proceed, sir, I will stay longer.

SIR FER. Ah! the Doctor—the Doctor!

MOBELS. You may expect to hear reason from him; but it is like expecting a tree without roots to sustain its vitality.

DR. BOL. Un-ideal, Mr. Mobels ; how can society be compared to a tree ?

MOBELS. Because some trees bear poison in their circulation, others wholesome fruit. You poison the current of public opinion.

GLOOM. That is good ; poison, I say. Kill and murder, and you do good. Verily, I say, you were all born to die ; that is one great consolation to me, a miserable sinner. Remember that the earth, and all that's in it, is doomed in two years.

MOBELS. I'll not forget to remind you of it at the proper time.

LORD HOL. There is but one way to save us, and that is to keep the people in the darkest ignorance ; make them blind to their own wants and all will go on well.

MOBELS. Go on, my Lord, you will, by often repeating the sophism, believe in it in time.

LORD HOL. This comes of associating with low people. Recollect, sir, there is a distinction between us ; I am a Peer.

MOBELS. There is, indeed, a great distinction between us—you inherited your distinction, I earned mine by honest industry ; you are a Lord by accident, I am a man with a good reputation of my own making ; I leave mankind to judge between us which has been the most useful member of society.

LORD HOL. Low-minded man, know that I am the apostle of charity, I would make the people happy.

GLOOM. Make the people happy ! Horrid profanity. I say this is a world for misery. All must be miserable—the Earl, an old man, has married a young wife to make her miserable—Lady Havall has seen to the grave three

old husbands and a young one—Dr. Boloram has got thousands by his bubble speculation—Lord Hollow wants to limit the appetite of the poor—Mobels makes people miserable by holding out delusive expectations. Ah, this is a wicked world, and the sooner procreation ceases the better, and so end our miserable existence. I pronounce suicide and murder as special acts of humanity.

ALL. Oh! oh! oh!

DR. BOL. Ungrateful man, I must put an end to this, therefore I dissolve the meeting.

ALL. No Doctor, the Doctor, the—

DR. BOL. Must I yield?

MOBELS. We should be perpetrating a great unkindness to you if we responded "No." I beg you will go on.

DR. BOL. Man! I will go on, if it is only for the great love I have for my fellow species. I will go on; but more especially for you, my dear disciples, first of men and women in intellect and reason. First, then, learned savans, I must tell you that which people call nature is all humbug—the natural must, I say, succumb to art and science; for instance, it is not that people seem so, that they are so in reality. Properly speaking, there is no such a thing as old age, which I can prove. Youth and beauty are interminable in my hands, only follow my prescription.

TOOL. [*aside*] Go on, grave Doctor, my Lady's devouring your words like a hungry boa-constrictor a live rabbit; you have her safe enough.

DR. BOL. Then as to love, I have charms to make young husbands doat on old matrons—young wives on old husbands.

COUNTESS. La ! Doctor, how can you do that ?

MOBELS. And what more ?

DR. BOL. Ah, and what more ; it is enough that I know more. Miracles have been, and science now supplies their place ; what was wrought by the former I can do by the latter, and Dr. Boloram is the humble demonstrator.

MOBELS. Not very humble.

DR. BOL. Humble to humility in himself, but not so in the eyes of the world. I could confound mankind, but I am satisfied with instructing.

MOBELS. No doubt, and with good reason.

DR. BOL. Ah, and with reason, too ; behold the miracle of my brain. Tool, I say.

[*Tool steps in front.*]

TOOL. Here I be, potent master of the arts, in whom nature lies enslaved.

DR. BOL. Good, good ; no more. What age art thou, good Tool. Speak plain, and with truth ?

TOOL. I will, good master. Then, as to my age, I was a hundred and twenty last lambing time.

MOBELS. One hundred and twenty. Pray, young man, consider a moment ; suppose you deduct a hundred.

TOOL. No, I wont ; not a day, not an hour.

DR. BOL. You hear what he says. Now tell me, simple-minded man, how you became so young ?

TOOL. As to how I became young again, I know not. All that I know is that I had sunk into decrepitude and old age ; it was you, good Doctor, that re-invigorated me, by your Promethean process of galvanism, by the infusion of vital gases into my body. Oh, my regenerator, my second parent, on my knees I humbly thank you.

DR. BOL. Do not kneel, it was my duty ; you was poor, you was needy.

TOOL. I was, I was ; my all was too little a recompense for prolonging my existence.

MOBELS. Young man, I have heard of people with inspired and supernatural imaginations, which I doubt ; but you have got a tongue in your mouth which, for lying, is unequalled in the present day, I doubt not in the least.

DR. BOL. Oh, Mr. Mobels, you, forsooth, think yourself wise ; no doubt it is for your interest to be thought so, the vulgar prejudices of the age require such minds as yours.

MOBELS. To guard them against the impudent frauds of empirics, who live on the credulity of their fellow-creatures. I am glad to hear you say that common sense is so very vulgar ; I had begun seriously to doubt it ; when I see every impudent impostor have so many proselytes I began to doubt the fact. I have that vulgar understanding that I believe what I see, and acknowledge as true what I comprehend, and what I can neither see nor understand I believe not ; nor do I follow with blind credulity the weak inventions of vicious men, who prey upon the weakness of their fellow creatures. I have a duty to perform, and I will not fail to do so.

DR. BOL. You hear him. A vile reflection on your understanding ; better, in fact, call you fools outright, as he does covertly. Less gentle natures would kick him—would mark their displeasure.

SAVANS. Oh, oh, oh !

MOBELS. What are you groaning at—me, or in the contrition of your own folly?

SAVANS. Mobels, Mobels!

DR. BOL. Ah, you Mobels! Pray do not, learned savans, he is only a weak-minded man. Still, if the very impenetrable Mr. Mobels will have proof, why then he shall be satisfied. Tool, I say, what more do you know of yourself?

TOOL. This much—that after I returned home, from Lunnun, young and vigorous—would you believe it?—my kindred did not know me; not a soul in all those parts knew me, though I was ready to swear to my identification before any justice of the peace. They would not have it at any rate, and from that very day my character was quite gone. An old woman swore I was very like myself sixty years ago; I told them the oft-repeated tale of the great battle I was in at Culloden, but all to no purpose; they all said I had read it in history books—and how could that be, when I don't know a letter in the alphabet?

DR. BOL. My friends, you hear?

MOBELS. I do hear, but do not believe.

TOOL. Bring the book, and I'll swear to it before the justice; if Majesty was here I would say it.

MOBELS. You have ignorance and assurance combined; that leaves no doubt in my mind but that you would perjure yourself.

TOOL. Doubts! I spurn all doubts. Ladies and gentlemen, look at me, do you think a poor country lad like me could circumvent such lies?

MOBELS. You look a very likely individual, in connection with the Doctor.

DR. BOL. Connection! What do you mean?

MOBELS. That I have no sort of doubt about it.

DR. BOL. I appeal to you, ladies and gentlemen.

SAVANS. Oh! oh! oh!

DR. BOL. Another demonstration, Mr. Mobels.

MOBELS. So I perceive—of their want of penetration.

TOOL. I gets indignant—give me the oath.

DR. BOL. You are a spy upon us.

MOBELS. Only a reporter, a chronicler of weak people's credulity.

DR. BOL. I am wroth.

MOBELS. You look so, people usually are when they have got into a bad argument.

DR. BOL. Some would turn you out.

LORD HOLL. Peace; touch not a man of Mr. Mobels' wealth. Riches has its immunities, dear Doctor; consider his position at the head of the public press. I am a man of charity, I teach the people to live upon a little.

MOBELS. And of course to be half starved with a little.

GLOOM. Glorious doctrine! Oh, how would my substance be benefited by it. There is good to be got in living upon a little, but what is the use of it?—if the Doctor is to prolong life, we shall soon be like cannibals, devour each other, hungry with famine. Let us do, I say, without procreation, and rid the earth of humanity, who are savages, who plunder, despoil, cheat, vilify, slander, and corrupt each other. Oh, glorious Malthus! respected man! founder of the great principle for the diminution of crime by the removal of the human species from the earth—thrice-honoured Jemima Wilkinson! founder of the fraternity of the "Shakers," emblem of chastity! what a burthen you might remove, if you could inoculate the people with your wisdom; what a drain

it would save on our pockets. I say there must be a restriction on marriage, and a tax upon children; the breeding of them must be stopped.

LADY FUR. Mr. Gloom, I am shocked at your want of feeling.

GLOOM. My words, your Ladyship, don't apply to you; I don't think you'll be troubled again at your age. Mind, I lay no absolute embargo, only a tax.

LADY HAV. What, brute, would you deprive us of the solace of our lives? Our very existence as women depends upon the men. If there were to be no marriages, what have we got to live for? We should be neither men nor women.

SIR FER. Gloom, you are a melancholy fellow.

SIR POGIS. Out upon your new-fangled theories, I represent good old England; I would restore the days of chivalry, when it was an honour to be the champion of fair woman. Any menial now may trifle with the fair fame of noble dames. Happy were the days when tilts and tournaments displayed the valour of our soul. Give me the good old times, when war was the occupation of the men, love and devotion of the fair.

MOBELS. Oh! the good old times, when war and carnage made widows and orphans, and filled the land with grief, and desolation, pestilence, and famine, following in its track, fields laid waste and made sterile; when tears and sighs usurped the place of mirth and happiness. Knight, this is a merry picture you would paint—a romantic thought of yours. I say, give us peace, the parent of prosperity.

LADY HAV. I do not like this war, that kills up all the young blood, it makes good men scarce, and the few

that are left conceited. I say, nothing like a choice of them; were there more men and fewer women it would be better.

THORPE. The very reverse, ancient Lady.

LADY HAV. Ancient, indeed, I may yet outlive a better man than you. Oh, doubt it not, I shall yet outlive my fifth, two men to one woman is not too much—one at a time, it is true; we women must be circumspect, or else—

MOBELS. Your Ladyship is immoderate; one to one is the order of nature.

SIR FER. Variety has charms; he that likes new scenery admires new faces, which is diversification in life truly natural.

LADY FUR. Very well, Sir Fernando, this is a specimen of what I am to expect in future. In public, too—I am disgusted.

SIR FER. Too sensitive a creature, dearest life, you overwhelm me; there's a dear, pray do not.

LADY FUR. This is the result of marrying a fool.

SIR FER. A fool, my Lady?—I am not a fool—I never was considered a fool—never, never!

MOBELS. Sister, you have been indiscreet in telling the truth.

LADY FUR. I will tell the truth, brother; nothing shall prevent me, though I am made miserable by it.

SIR FER. Mr. Mobels, I appeal to you.

MOBELS. Don't appeal to me, without you wish to hear the truth, and that might prove disagreeable.

DR. BOL. I dissolve the meeting. Lady Havall, your most obedient. When shall I see you again?

LADY HAV. This evening, good Doctor, I will wait upon you.

DR. BOL. Do, dearest Lady Havall, though moments to me are as ages to others, your Ladyship may command me. Lady Furnace, when may I have the pleasure of rendering you any service?

LADY FUR. Oh, Doctor, could you but—

DR. BOL. I understand you—your husband—I can do it [*musings*]. At present he is not so fond a husband, certainly.

LADY FUR. Ah, Doctor [*sighing*].

MOBELS. I suppose this piece of imposition is at an end for the present.

DR. BOL. Imposition! Get out, degenerate man, and come not here again.

MOBELS. I know it is annoying to you, and it's inconvenience, for you shun exposure as the owl does the light. I will not fail to inform the public of your doings.

[*Exeunt all but the DOCTOR, TOOL, and MOBELS.*]

DR. BOL. Man, I hate you.

MOBELS. True; I know you do—good day to you.

[*Exit MOBELS.*]

DR. BOL. He is gone.

TOOL. Doctor, I enacted my part.

DR. BOL. Truly.

TOOL. Not truly; a lie cannot be called the truth; but well I played my part.

DR. BOL. Good—thou profitest.

TOOL. Not at present, my gains have been small—they are yet to come—you promised me—

DR. BOL. True; I did, Tool; I have given you the first instalment.

TOOL. Wonderful! I have not seen it.

DR. BOL. Not seen it! I have taught you to lie with unblushing effrontery.

TOOL. Doctor, that I was always able to do before judge and jury; thrice I have been tested, and my veracity never shaken; once for diving, once for money changing, and the last time for entering a house by the area, and making free with the spoons

DR. BOL. Which time it would have gone hard with you, but for me; therefore, Tool, be grateful, and render me submissive obedience.

TOOL. So I will, good master—[*aside*] so long as it suits me.

DR. BOL. Leave me, Tool.

TOOL. I go, good master—[*aside as he leaves*—just outside the door. Master Doctor talks with himself—it is then he lets out his secrets; my ear and the key-hole shall be presently very familiar.

DR. BOL. There goes Tool; and what is all the world but a tool which I, like a cunning handicraftsman, use for mine own purpose? Lady Havall feels disposed to be young again; I will make her so in her own belief—I will pocket her wealth, fleece her of half her substance, make myself rich on her credulity; and so I'll do it. Lady Furnace, too, she is jealous of her young husband; she, too, shall pay for his continence. So, so, I am in a fair way to riches. I long to be rich, to gratify my love and pride. I will have a wife, young and beautiful, devoted to me, and who shall administer to my pleasure; abject slaves about me, obedient to my will. Already I have lined my coffers, but what of that, I would have more.

[*Tool half opens the door.*]

TOOL. So you shall, but I'll have shares.

DR. BOL. Now, Boloram, you are in the true road to fame and riches. I'll to Lady Havall's; I long to clutch her cash.
[Exit DR. BOL.]

SCENE II.—SIR FERNANDO *and* LADY FURNACE'S
HOUSE.

EDITH *and* PHILLIS *discovered.*

PHILLIS. What a melancholy condition is a young woman's, she can see young men, admire them, languish in love of them, without even daring to trust her own bosom with the secret, much less to make known her affections. Alas! we are a poor oppressed sex. Talk of wrongs, Miss Edith, what is equal to ours—the wound of our most sensitive feelings? The men, Miss, have always been tyrants to the women, kept them under; but we'll no longer be slaves—we'll have a republic of women.

EDITH. Too true—it is a pity we cannot have our own way.

PHILLIS. And select our own husbands. If there is to be such a thing as liberty, it ought to be in the free choice of a husband. What were men made for but to gratify the women, to be slaves to our will, and to administer to our pleasures? They ought to be considered in the light of property, and we allowed to do as we like with them—at any rate with our own husbands; and no woman ought to rest satisfied with less than a husband of her own free choice. Don't you agree with me, Miss Edith?

EDITH. Perfectly.

BLANCHE. Then I'll agitate for our rights, for I see nothing is to be done without agitation; I'll strike a spark that shall go off like gun cotton.

EDITH. But will not the world think it indelicate?

PHILLIS. Only for a time, custom will reconcile all that—custom is everything; there is no indelicacy in custom, it gives its sanction to everything in due time; if it is the custom, one may make as great a fool of oneself as we please; for instance, men and women may powder their hair as white as a cauliflower, women wear hoops and other 'mentionables, smear their face with paint, and then, like a New Zealander, dot it all over with black sticking-plaster; nay, they may go further, and suffocate themselves in tight-laced stays; and yet all goes down, if it is the custom. If some were to set the fashion of tattooing, we should all in a short time become a race of New Zealanders. What, then, Miss Edith, is custom or fashion, but a fickle flirt, who one while makes us believe she is in earnest, and then, by some sudden caprice, jilts us—it is a moral, this custom, that teaches us what slavish fools we are to fashion.

EDITH. My sweet waiting woman, you are moralising and talking philosophy.

PHILLIS. No, Miss Edith, only on human nature; a tale of our own weakness. Oh dear, what poor creatures we are! I would fain be independent, and do without a husband, but my womanhood rebels against myself, and proves that I am, after all, but a poor weak woman, at man's mercy.

EDITH. True, true, a greater truth never spoken—we are the slaves to man, poor, willing, self-taught slaves. Oh, man, after this candid acknowledgment, could you have the heart to treat us as inferior creatures of the creation?

PHILLIS. You forget, my dear young lady, we have not told the men so, as yet; this is only private converse, we must keep this secret of our hearts from them, or they will hold us too cheap; but I have a project in hand, if I dared tell you.

EDITH. What is it?

PHILLIS. This theory of mine, woman's rights and marital abuses.

EDITH. And what?

PHILLIS. Simply, it means matrimonial abuses; it is monstrous in this age of moral improvement that man should be allowed to pick and cull the sweetest flowers for his matrimonial couch; all's on one side—the man's side; which he has had from time immemorial, it is time the tide turned, and gave us the privilege of moving; what matrimonial bliss would result from the change, no ill-tempered wives, made sour by disappointment in being denied the object of their affection.

EDITH. But then I am afraid there would be disappointed, ill-tempered husbands.

PHILLIS. Let them be so; never mind, so that we get what pleases us; trust me for a woman, I, for one, would coax and caress—if he had a heart of stone, I would melt it, so that I had a man I really did love.

EDITH. And what sort of a husband could you really most love?

PHILLIS. He must be well proportioned, not less than five feet ten, with an agreeable expression, and no natural defects, a generous disposition and manly good sense; so that I might never feel ashamed of his looks, or blush for his ignorance.

EDITH. All very excellent qualities, but how is this state of things to be brought about?

PHILLIS. I think easy enough, write it up.

EDITH. But who is to be the promoter, the writer up.

PHILLIS. If I thought you would condescend to put my ideas into good English. Ah, Miss, I am not blessed with the education you are; if I was, I should be prepared for any emergency in so good a cause; but I am only a poor young ladies' maid. Oh, Miss Edith, think of the wrongs of your sex, the myriads of young women cast away, united to ill-sorted old men, mere skins of parchment enclosing dry bones, ready-made mummies. What comfort can a young woman have with such old furniture—lumber I calls them, much in the way—the very thought freezes the blood, and turns love into an icicle, and makes the sight of matrimony a loathing. Oh, Miss, if public opinion should sanction my plan, think of the testimonials that will be presented to me; certainly a greater good never was, or never can be effected; a hundred thousand pounds at least. Every nurse girl; every mantua-maker's assistant, every poor governess—that friendless class of individuals—then the old maids, with their snarling black and tanned Charleys, that are adopted instead of a husband, or for want of an infant, they would discard their little mongrel *protégés* for ever. They would then get husbands, and dear interesting infants would have a preference to the snarling canines.

EDITH. Really, you are quite eloquent—a second Sapho, a Cicero in petticoats.

PHILLIS. It is the cause, the feeling inspires me, and if we don't get our own rights we will have our revenge; we'll revolutionize society, and deny our husbands connubial bliss. You, Miss, that have got such a dear lover, suppose he was the very reverse, instead of gay

and handsome, ugly and morose—the contrast shows my meaning—cannot you, then, feel for us less fortunate beings than yourself.

EDITH. I do begin to think that we have not had all our just privileges.

PHILLIS. Not more than half of them. Not only had we ought to have the choice of our own husbands, but we ought to have a law to put him to death if he should ever be inconstant; else what is the good of matrimony? It becomes a mixture of good and evil. If I was you, Miss Edith, I would be mistress of my own husband's affections. What are affections for, if we are not allowed to enjoy them exclusively? Well, if ever I do marry, it shall be some one I love.

EDITH. Well, Phillis, I cannot blame you.

PHILLIS. Nor do I you, Miss Edith, for loving Lord Pyers.

EDITH. You presume—How do you know that I love him?

PHILLIS. Miss Edith, poor servants are not without observation, no more than their superiors. What were eyes made for, but to see with? Countenances betray the secrets of the heart as well as the tongue. Love is natural, but fashion is artificial, and makes gentlefolks disguise their true feelings; but the truth will out, let them try ever so well to conceal it: but if I was a lady I would be open and sincere, and yield at once.

EDITH. And surrender without a siege?

PHILLIS. To be sure I would. What is the use dilly-dallying, and losing precious time in courtship when the man is in the humour, and you in no other respect obliged to remain single?

EDITH. You might do so, but I am different.

PHILLIS. Not in this respect, Miss Edith, however we may be in station. We are both women. What is true in nature holds equally good in high life as in humble life: rich people must fall in love as well as poor girls.—Nature obliges them.

EDITH. Really, Phillis, I must not listen to you, or you will quite corrupt my morals.

PHILLIS. That is, Miss Edith, you would say, corrupting nature, which is impossible. La, Miss Edith, true love is as incorruptible as a brilliant of the first water; for my part, I could sit down the live-long day, thinking of our affections; I could cry at this moment thinking of it. [*Cries.*]

EDITH. What a silly girl, Phillis; I cannot sympathise with you. [*Crying.*]

PHILLIS. You cannot help it, Miss Edith; by stifling love you wound the generous feeling of your own heart. Ah! Miss Edith, these tears will do you a world of good; they are nature triumphanting over fashion.

EDITH. I hear a rap; who have we here?

PHILLIS. I guess.

EDITH. Dear me; what shall I do? I have lost my pocket handkerchief; what in heaven am I to do?

PHILLIS. Do nothing; honest tears never do any harm. If any one asks you what you have been crying about, say for your amusement. I often cry for my amusement. [*Rapping louder.*]

EDITH. Run to the door; and say no one's in.

PHILLIS. No one's in, and you cannot enter.

LORD PYERS. Why, how can that be, when you are in; if no one's in, what matters who enters. I must come in.

PHILLIS. Oh, ma'am, he says he must come in; whatever shall I do? I am afraid he will be resolute, and take no denial.

EDITH. Say I am in my *dishabille*.

PHILLIS. La, Miss, that will be no obstacle in the way; there is no harm in trying, though—Miss Edith is in her *dishabille*, and cannot see you.

LORD PYERS. Edith, dear Edith, I have something to tell you; can you refuse me? Dear Edith, speak to me.

PHILLIS. Have you the heart?

EDITH. I cannot see you, my Lord.

LORD PYERS. Why not?

EDITH. I do not know.

LORD PYERS. If that is the strongest argument that you can use, I may venture to force my way in.

PHILLIS. Do not do that; my Lady Furnace else will find out some one has been here in her absence, from the broken door. Miss Edith, see how determined he is; do let him come in, just to see what apology he can make for his violence; only think if he breaks the door down what a scolding I shall get from your mamma. Shall I?—silence is as good as yes.

Enter LORD PYERS.

LORD PYERS. Dear Edith! [*attempts to kiss her.*]

EDITH. Oh don't; I shall be quite offended.

LORD PYERS. You have a forgiving disposition, so I will venture!

PHILLIS. So she has, my Lord, and wont quarrel with you about such a trifle as that.

LORD PYERS. Your eyes are red, you have been crying, surely there is no cause for unhappiness.

EDITH. I have not.

PHILLIS. I'll vow we have not.

LORD PYERS. Your appearance, too, strongly supports my opinion. Your eyes are red too.

EDITH. I assure you, you are quite mistaken.

PHILLIS. [*aside*] Hang it, Miss, it is no use dissembling, he won't believe us.

EDITH. Hush! not a word—

LORD PYERS. Then you have been crying?

EDITH. No.

PHILLIS. Oh, Miss! you know we have.

LORD PYERS. What can have made you unhappy, dear Edith?

EDITH. Nothing.

LORD PYERS. Nothing? that is very strange.

PHILLIS. It is the truth, though—women's talk and our own amusement; imagination and the like, that is all.

EDITH. That is all, I assure you.

All. Ha! ha! ha!

EDITH. Listen! I hear some one coming, I am afraid it is mamma and Sir Fernando returned—whatever shall I do? Hide yourself behind the screen.

Enter SIR FERNANDO and LADY FURNACE.

LADY FUR. Well, daughter, I hope you have been engaged profitably in my absence.

EDITH. [*aside*] I must assume a little confidence—oh yes, dear mamma; and then I receive such instructive lessons from my dear papa, that I do nothing but laugh at; he is so ideal, so impassioned. I do declare at times I think that he has got the hydrophobia.

LADY FUR. My dear, this levity ill becomes you; I insist that you treat your step-father with proper respect.

EDITH. So I will; your benediction, venerable sir.

SIR FER. Come here, darling; kiss me.

EDITH. Horror! save me from that favour, I am not ambitious of it.

SIR FER. Interesting creature, do endure it for my sake?

LADY FUR. Sir Fernando, your folly is disgusting; I feel indignant.

SIR FER. Don't, pray don't; she is certainly a seductive creature, and is a temptation in the way of any fellow, and is a creature excessively dangerous to virtue. I must really have one pure, quite pure, I assure you—embrace.

EDITH. Oh Heavens! he is mad; help! help!

[LORD PYERS *rushes forward*.]

[*aside*] How unfortunate, I had forgot Pyers.

LADY FUR. So so, daughter, you have visitors when I am out. My Lord, I insist upon it that you discontinue your visits; if it was a person of an inferior station to yourself, I should command him instantly to leave the house.

LORD PYERS. My Lady, I know that I am transgressing, but I did think your objections might yet be removed.

LADY FUR. I still disapprove of your visits, you are both too young. Edith, retire.

EDITH. Mother!

LADY FUR. Do not let me exert a mother's authority.

SIR FER. I protest! I protest!

LORD PYERS. My Lady Furnace, you are unjust, do not let me be the cause of any uneasiness. What are your objections?

LADY FUR. They are my own, and explanation is unnecessary.

SIR FER. The fact is—

LADY FUR. Stop, Sir Fernando, do not commit yourself; my motives need no explanation, we keep our confidence. I would say good morning, my Lord Pyers Gayton.

LORD PYERS. I take your meaning, my presence shall not longer offend you. Edith! dear Edith! do not forget me, farewell, love, [*aside*] but for a short time, I will find means of communicating with you. Your Ladyship, Sir Fernando, good morning.

Exit LORD PYERS, R, EDITH, L.

LADY FUR. This must be put a stop to, the Earl is as reluctant at present to his son's marriage, as I am to Edith's; before she marries she must make a sacrifice of a part of her fortune—you understand me, Sir Fernando.

[*As* LADY FUR. *turns round to speak to* SIR FER., *she perceives* PHIL.

Ah! who have we here? You minx! what, have you been listening?—what have you heard?

PHILLIS. Nothing, my Lady.

LADY FUR. You hussey, look me in the face.

PHILLIS. I only just came in to tell you my Lord has left.

LADY FUR. It's all very well, if you speak the truth; leave the room. [*Exit* PHIL.] You understand me, Sir Fernando.

SIR FER. Most transparently, my exquisite.

LADY FUR. When will you, Sir Fernando, leave off that folly of addressing me in such extravagant language? I propose writing upon the Lord Gayton this very day,

and informing him of his son's attachment to my daughter ; he, of course, has the same objections as we have. Will you accompany me ?

SIR FER. Yes, fairest, I will charge myself with that exquisite pleasure.

LADY FER. Come then.

END OF FIRST ACT.

ACT SECOND.

SCENE I.—DR. BOLORAM'S HOUSE.

The DOCTOR sitting musing. Enter TOOL, ushering in LADY HAVALL.

TOOL. Grave Doctor, Lady Havall waits your presence.

DOCTOR. This is a scull of an Egyptian Maji, brought from Afric mystic clime, and this the very lamp that illuminated the mental reveries of departed wisdom.

LADY HAV. See how abstracted the Doctor is. Doctor, I come to my appointment.

TOOL. Oh, my Lady, he hears you not ; if a cannon was to go off, and the ball whiz by his eyes, he would not hear it, or yet see it.

LADY HAV. Lay your hand upon him, he may feel, though he cannot hear or see. [TOOL shakes him.

DR. BOL. Disturb me not ; the noble fabric of my brain may be lost in air, if not committed to the self-keeping of ink and paper. Leave me—leave me—you know not what the world may lose else.

LADY HAV. Remember the appointment ; don't disappoint me.

DR. BOL. There is but one person on earth that I would now counsel with, a woman once of surpassing beauty ; now alas ! grown old ; the conqueror of man, slaves to her charms, alas ! no more.

LADY HAV. What may be her name ?

DR. BOL. The Lady Havall, the most divine of women, the most intellectual of her sex, whom no artifice can deceive.

LADY HAV. I believe you, Doctor—I am Lady Havall.

DR. BOL. Must I, then, lose my sublime conjectures, and mar my train of thoughts? I will, for it is thee. I will not ask what want you of me, for that I have an intuitive faculty of discovering; beauty and youth, with all its glorious feeling, are indeed worth restoring; and such beauty as you had, and such feelings that you had—does not the thought ravish your very soul?

LADY HAV. Who can doubt it, Doctor, who has felt as I have—who has triumphed as I have?—it is hard to lose either pleasure or power—do it, Doctor, and you will find me generous. I care not for price.

DR. BOL. But, mark, I can only restore. I cannot give that which did not formerly exist.

LADY HAV. That is as much, Doctor, as I require; I don't want to be made more beautiful than I was; make me as I was on the day of my first marriage, restore my feelings, and name your fee.

DR. BOL. By my mesmeratic process I can give not only youth and beauty, but restore feelings and sensations of pleasure as exquisite as those of young maturity; your age I can prolong to an infinite period: if you value your existence.

LADY HAV. Oh, Doctor! is it possible?

DR. BOL. Possible, let your doubts vanish; proof I'll give you. Tool, I say!

Enter TOOL.

TOOL. Speedily, good master; I am light and blight now.

DR. BOL. Do you know this lady?

TOOL. Know her; I have known her all her life; my granddaughter was her wet nurse.

LADY HAV. Impossible! you look a mere boy.

TOOL. A boy! it may appear so; you would not have said so a year ago. I am just one hundred and twenty years old: it is well the Doctor found me out in time to save me from dying of old age. A year ago I was the oldest looking individual you ever saw.

LADY HAV. You amaze me; it is strange!

DR. BOL. But true. Tool, leave the room, and close the door after you.

TOOL. [*aside*] I will, but I'll see through the key-hole what is going on; his secrets shall be in common with myself.

LADY HAV. Well, Doctor, what are your terms?

DR. BOL. Moderate, extremely moderate, for the infinite good they confer. Mine is a rare knowledge, known only to myself.

LADY HAV. It is, Doctor, truly.

DR. BOL. Then you really believe in me?

LADY HAV. Who can disbelieve, after seeing that honest young man, and his offering to swear to the truth of what he said?

DR. BOL. My Lady, he would do so, and much more, if it were required of him; but enough—excuse me, madam, what have you usually paid for a set of artificial teeth?

LADY HAV. Doctor, you confuse me; I could not have believed—

DR. BOL. Do not be surprised, I know of everything pertaining to you; concealment is unnecessary.

LADY HAV. That I perceive. The fact is, my last husband has been dead a twelvemonth, and it is now time to look about—there is nothing like the present.

DR. BOL. I am glad you think so—but, my Lady, the teeth?

LADY HAV. As I was saying, Doctor, it is time I looked out; well, I have done so, and I do say I have lit upon the very man; he will be the best of the five, I would have chosen him before all; and if he had not a rag, and came to me stark naked, I would take him. Oh, he is a fine-formed, likely young fellow! But then he might not exactly like to take a woman rather older-looking than himself, as he is not yet quite of age, so that if I looked about eighteen, it would be an agreeable assimilation; and I do protest, Doctor, that it is my serious conviction that I could as tenderly love a dear creature like Pyers for a husband as well as ever I could a man in my life.

DR. BOL. Better; your past experience will assist to inflame your passion.

LADY HAV. I have no doubt of it, Doctor. Come, name your terms.

DR. BOL. Moderate, most moderate, considering the great ends. But the question of the teeth?

LADY HAV. La! Doctor, what can it matter, if you are to put me fresh ones in?

DR. BOL. Simply that I should know how to put a price upon the real ones.

LADY HAV. They cost me five hundred pounds.

DR. BOL. Hum! Expensive—intrinsic value small compared—no object, however, to the rich. My Lady, to be candid, if I am to make a complete job of you, I must be paid 100,000*l*. It is too little, I know, but then, like

an inimitable good that wealth covets, its value is inestimable; you alone shall be the recipient of that good, you alone shall live to immortality, and while you witness the coming into the world of thousands, you alone shall see them going out.

LADY HAV. Am I asleep, and been dreaming? A hundred thousand pounds! Doctor, you provoke me. I would rather first shrivel up into an old woman, and die to-morrow, than pay a tithe of the money; it is more than one's life is worth.

DR. BOL. Think of the sweets of connubial love, with all the flame and ardour of youth; the restoration of beauty, without the alloy of false hair, false teeth, or the aid of spectacles.

LADY HAV. Five thousand at the very most, and at the end of half a century I'll double it.

DR. BOL. Keep your money, and I'll keep my secret; let your executors lock it up in your coffin. If you are fool big enough, go, die speedily; but remember—ah, remember.

LADY HAV. Be it so; I am prepared to stand by my property to the very last; old age, nay death, has not half the terrors as parting with one's money; so, Doctor, we part.

DR. BOL. Stop, my Lady; consider what you lose by rejecting my offer. Monsieur M., for another set of teeth, £500; rouge, a considerable item; cosmetics for the skin; the milk of two cows for a bath to prop up your declining strength; yet all won't conceal or keep back the ravages of age; in the meantime decrepitude overtakes you, palsy and blindness threatens you. Think, my Lady, and pause—hereafter I may not gratify you; when

stumbling on the brink of the grave you may hereafter, perhaps, cry in vain for the elixir of life.

LADY HAV. I care not, I can be obstinate; five thousand is all that I can give—half down, and the other half when I am finished.

DR. BOL. All down, or nothing; there do I take my stand on the paltry five thousand.

LADY HAV. Must I? Oh, it is a large amount. I give it conditionally that you begin on me immediately, and that you return the money if you don't succeed; for I am anxious to get married.

DR. BOL. That I solemnly promise. When shall I wait upon you? I'll soon finish you.

[TOOL *peeps in at the door.*

TOOL. That there can be no doubt of. Come, Master Doctor, a pretty good day's work—I must have snacks.

LADY HAV. Good morning, Doctor; then I shall see you to-morrow?

DR. BOL. The money ready, remember, my lady.

LADY HAV. I will not fail. Farewell, good Doctor.

DR. BOL. Charming angel! Good day, dotard.
[Exit LADY HAV.] I care not, so I have your money.
It is thus fools are made our willing slaves.

[Exit DR. BOLORAM.]

SCENE II.—LORD GAYTON'S HOUSE.

SIR FERNANDO, LADY FURNACE, *and the* COUNTESS.

COUNTESS. Lord Pyers Gayton proposed to your daughter?—you surprise me.

LADY FUR. As to that, you need not be surprised, Countess, for she is one of the richest heiresses in town;

but she is too young to be married at present, and she loses a part of her fortune if she marries without my consent.

COUNTESS. [*musings*] It must not be—the Earl must know of it. If Piers Gayton marries before an arrangement is come to with his father, I shall never be sufficiently provided for.

LADY FUR. That is just the case with me. My daughter must not marry until after she is of age, when she can make me a suitable provision.

COUNTESS. [*aside*] I have unconsciously betrayed myself; I did not think I had been so weak as to betray my feelings. [*Rallying*] My Lady Furnace, it would be really distressing if your daughter were to marry so very young, and your ladyship inadequately provided for—it would be truly distressing. Besides, Piers is much too young to make a lasting impression upon; young men soon tire. Really, I beg your Ladyship's pardon, I had forgot you had so young a husband as Sir Fernando.

LADY FUR. There I must differ from you, Countess; a husband cannot well be too young, if he is faithful and affectionate.

COUNTESS. If he is faithful and affectionate, I grant you; but will he—

LADY FUR. Ah, Countess, you will find it out in time; when you get as old as I am you will then be just ready for a young husband; for my part I don't like old husbands, their constant assiduity to please, without being able, is tiresome. Ah, Countess, experience will teach you the difference between an old husband and a young one.

COUNTESS. Now, my opinion is quite the reverse;

women ought to have passive and enduring husbands, to bear with our little weaknesses, and not assume the lord at the little foibles inherent to our sex; though I confess an old man is more jealous, sometimes from sheer sensitiveness of his own incapacity to please; still, they are so dreadfully alarmed at scandal peeping into their windows, that they are glad to hush up any little trifling affair, as an atonement for their past folly—for who pities an old husband's misfortunes? If he appeals to a jury he brings on himself the derision of society, and is placarded as a superannuated old fool; the wife is made the victim of an ill-sorted marriage, and if any fair she is convicted of a little romantic adventure the chivalry of Doctors' Commons is roused, alimony is the result, and the opportunity of getting a young husband of her choice the sequel.

LADY FUR. Countess, you express just the feelings that I had when I was a young wife. I perceive human nature is just the same now as it was then. Believe me, Countess, opportunity is a very dangerous thing when in the way of young wives with old husbands.

COUNTESS. Dear Lady Furnace, you alarm me, you terrify me; I don't know really how I am to escape. Really, it is cruel to excite such suspicions, I shall begin to suspect myself.

LADY FUR. After all, Countess, we are poor weak creatures, and, do what we may, we are to be pitied; it is in our nature, and we cannot help it, the responsibility evidently don't rest with us.

COUNTESS. We are, indeed, poor weak sensitive creatures, and it is impossible to say what impression may not cross our minds; a woman's fancy is like a mirror, it will pourtray its object.

LADY FUR. I am delighted with your wit and imagination. Countess, could I but hope to have the honour of a further and more intimate acquaintance I should feel honoured; would you, Countess, but honour my poor mansion?

COUNTESS. Really, I don't know what people one may meet.

LADY FUR. Choose your own society, Countess; not one shall be asked to meet you, but whom you especially approve of.

COUNTESS. On that condition I may.

LADY FUR. I feel honoured, Countess, and as we have a common interest at stake in preventing the young people marrying, we may find our advantage in a closer connection.

COUNTESS. I think so; this makes me doubly anxious.

LADY FUR. Countess, I take my leave. Good morning, Countess. *[Exit.]*

COUNTESS. Good morning. What humility and meanness will not womankind stoop to for the gratification of empty pride. The honest citizen's wife must be a lady—Ha, ha, ha! I cannot help laughing. However, it is well I have seen her Ladyship, as it may prevent fatal consequences to myself. I'll go and apprise my husband of his son's intentions, without delay. *[Exit.]*

SCENE III.—MOBELS seated in an easy chair.

MOBELS and PHILLIS.

MOBELS. *[Rap at the door]* Come in, I say.

Enter PHILLIS, standing by the door.

PHILLIS. I am positively overwhelmed with fright; whatever shall I do? Nothing can sustain me but the

cause, and if that fails—why I'll e'en rap again, to gain time to collect my scared thoughts.

[Raps at the door, holding it in her hand.]

MOBELS. Come in, I say.

PHILLIS. Coming, sir; coming, sir.

MOBELS. Then why don't you?

PHILLIS. So I will, sir.

MOBELS. So you will!—then why do you stand shaking at the door?

PHILLIS. Because I don't know how to deliver myself. I never did feel such fright before. Missus being gone out, I thought it right to—

MOBELS. Why, what has happened?

PHILLIS. Nothing at present.

MOBELS. Nothing?—why then there can be nothing to be alarmed at.

PHILLIS. Yes, there is—it is what is to come.

MOBELS. Pooh, nonsense! Never fear what's to come.

PHILLIS. La! sir, I don't fear what is to come of it, I only fear for myself, that the subject is in too feeble hands when in a woman's; if it was in your hands, Mr. Mobels, why then no woman need fear.

MOBELS. My hands—what do you mean?

PHILLIS. Why, what I mean is the rights of woman. Oh, Mr. Mobels, if you would but deign to stand up for the sex as the pillar of liberty, you would be the monument of woman's pride. Think how our privileges have been subverted.

MOBELS. What is the girl talking about?

PHILLIS. Oh, sir, do but condescend to understand me; some bachelors are not altogether so indifferent to a young lady's waiting woman—that is, if she is pretty;

but you, Mr. Mobels, I do not wonder at your estrangement from the sex, you are filled with the public good. Oh, Mr. Mobels, if we could enlist you on our side, on the side of woman—why you would bring about a new era.

MOBELS. What do you mean? The girl is certainly mad.

PHILLIS. Why this is it, sir. Since men have had the choice of wives for at least six thousand years, and not wives of husbands, it naturally follows that such a law, made in that very primitive state of society, when the world was first made, must be very bad indeed; this is proved from the experience of six thousand years in the innumerable unhappy marriages. Look, sir, at the literary history of crim. cons., and it is demonstrated beyond a doubt that they arise from ill-sorted marriages. Now, if women had chosen their own husbands, there never could have been so much vice and unhappiness; this is apparent, because if a wife liked her husband, she would endeavour to please him, and be faithful to him.

MOBELS. But then it does not follow that the husband should like the wife who chose him, any more than the wife should like the husband who chose her.

PHILLIS. Disregard that idea altogether, dear Mr. Mobels. Women, when they love, know how to dissemble; they can coax and caress, so as to deceive the very devil. Oh sir, you do not know us women! we have more craft and subtlety than you are aware of; we can appear jealous when we are indifferent, and indifferent when we are actually dying of love. If men did but know what dissembling wives they had, who did not love them: half of the husbands would go mad and hang themselves.

MOBELS. And if the women knew the dispositions of husbands who are indifferent to their wives, I suppose the wives would go and do the same.

PHILLIS. Nothing of the kind, Mr. Mobels, if a wife has a brute of a husband, who feels indifferent to her, she punishes him without letting him know how she does it; she makes his home uncomfortable as if by accident. Trust a woman for that; she has too good an opinion of herself to be slighted for nothing, and if one won't love her, perhaps others will. Ah! Mr. Mobels, we are not such tame creatures as to suffer indifference without retaliation; if we are weak and defenceless, we are resentful and wilful: a man must either seek our love, or provoke our hate.

MOBELS. This is a dreadful picture of humanity.

PHILLIS. A faithful drawn one from nature. Marry a woman to a man she hates, and what can you expect? A woman after all, is only a domestic slave, and the fetters of wedlock are intolerable, when worn against her will; but such is the perversity of our nature, that if you allow a woman to make choice of her master, nothing on earth will ever convince her of her loss of liberty; nay, she will glory in it.

MOBELS. Why you wish to uproot the whole social system.

PHILLIS. I do—as it exists: Is it not a pity to see such a vast number of young men at liberty, when there are so many young women sighing for them? I am convinced, Mr. Mobels, if a law was passed to make it indispensable that the women should be the suitors, that of those regiments of fine young fellows that are stationed round London, there would not long be a

single man amongst them. What happiness would that confer—what bliss—what enchantment in rescuing them from the solitude of a single life! Oh, Mr. Mobels, if a servant dared to be candid; what could I not say in honour of you, already so distinguished, if you became the champion of poor defenceless women; if you opened the columns of your paper to the advocacy of their rights. Think, sir, of the immortal good you would be doing posterity; and of the grateful feelings of a whole legion of women.

MOBELS. Well, well, girl, you are enthusiastic, but not altogether deficient of sense.

PHILLIS. I am enthusiastic! Oh, Mr. Mobels! I do think I could love you; though you might, without any disadvantage to yourself, be younger.

MOBELS. [*aside*] The girl has a mind to make love to me. Certainly I might be younger; I was so yesterday.

PHILLIS. And doubtless will be still older to-morrow, and so were all the world, we grow in age with time. It is your experience, your sagacity, your influence, that I so much covet—I may say your wisdom, which I adore. Oh! Mr. Mobels, if I thought I could get you to insert a memorial to the public, stating the grievances of our sex, think what might follow: the prayers of millions of young women would be offered up for you, whom you had relieved from the greatest of all disabilities—the one thing most needed—the freedom of election. Whether they should have a husband of their own choice or not; or in fact whether a husband at all.

MOBELS. What is it you want me to do?

PHILLIS. Simply to put this little memorial into the most conspicuous place of your columns.

MOBELS. What is the purport of it?

PHILLIS. Read it, sir.

MOBELS. "Rights of Women.—Free Trade in Matrimony.—Whereas it hath been the privilege of men, from time immemorial, to select their own wives; it follows that wives have frequently been grievously disappointed; and hence arises one of the fundamental evils in the social system, which wants reforming: and as it has been found, by the long experience of six thousand years, that good cannot come of it, except by a total revision of the present order of things, inasmuch as that which is very wrong cannot by any consequence be right; it naturally follows that things in general must want changing; and as there can be but one remedy for this great grievance, and that is that the choice of husbands should fall to the very able hands of the women, who are much more discriminating than the men, and such being the case, henceforth the women shall make choice of their husbands for the next six thousand years, carrying out thereby a most equitable principle of mutual concession; for it is not wise, nor yet just, that those who had the privilege for one six thousand years should have it for the succeeding six thousand years. Besides, wise men will at once see the advantage in having wives who tenderly love them; their honour will be less likely to be perilled, and their reputation infinitely more secure; whereas, under the old law, previously existing, no man could tell whether his wife loved him or not, man being the projecting party.—*Nota Bene*: A meeting will be shortly held of single young women, to form a committee, draw up resolutions, and get these principles adopted as soon as possible. Mark well, no widows need attend."

PHILLIS. Now, sir, what do you think of my project?

MOBELS. It will suit the women most admirably, and the uglier ones in particular; they, of course, will have much to rejoice at.

PHILLIS. Exactly so; those that have lost an eye, or a leg, for instance, or that have a hunch on their shoulder, may then get married, as men do similarly situated in those respects—that is justice. My plan, Mr. Mobels, is that the handsome ones should go together, and the ugly ones together; this I advocate for consistency sake—I always like things to match.

MOBELS. Of course, and you would like a husband tolerably handsome, like yourself, Miss Phillis.

PHILLIS. Not tolerably, but very handsome.

MOBELS. Because you are so pretty, Miss Phillis.

PHILLIS. La! Mr. Mobels, I did not insinuate as much.

MOBELS. Only thought so.

PHILLIS. You cannot, sir, know that.

MOBELS. I do, though; a woman never yet had a pretty face without knowing it. Is it not so, Miss Phillis?

PHILLIS. Do not make me blush for my sex, Mr. Mobels; I fear it is so, but then I am an exception.

MOBELS. All other women would say the same thing.

PHILLIS. If they did say so they would fib.

MOBELS. Then you do not fib?

PHILLIS. Oh, Mr. Mobels, never.

MOBELS. If I were to say you loved some one or another, what should you say to that?

PHILLIS. I am sure I don't know; I dare not say you fibbed, because of offending you. Will you, sir, grant my request, and become our advocate?

MOBELS. We'll see about it.

PHILLIS. If you don't, we'll surely bring about a revolution.

MOBELS. If you do you will surely bring about a convulsion—I'll not say of what.

PHILLIS. I'll agitate—I'll inflame—I'll turn incendiary—I'll—in fact, Mr. Mobels, I'll—Oh dear, I had forgot. What shall I do? My young mistress is waiting to be dressed, in expectation of seeing—nobody. What shall I do? it is past the hour. Oh, deary me! I must be off like a charge from a galvanic battery. Adieu, Mr. Mobels—adieu. One word more, dear Mr. Mobels; I could worship you, if you were but the fast friend of the unmarried maids. Mr. Mobels, I kiss your hands; be propitious to our cause—farewell, I am off like a shot.

[*Exit* PHILLIS.]

MOBELS. That is a clever girl, and only wants education to make her a wit.

[*Exit* MOBELS.]

SCENE IV.—LADY FURNACE'S HOUSE.

LADY FURNACE *alone*.

LADY FUR. What a thing it is to have a husband one cannot confide in; here I have got to contend with three open suitors of my daughter's, and Heaven knows how many in the back ground. Lord Pyers is certainly the most advantageous, but I dare not attempt any arrangement with him. Then there is Lord Hollow, a most sincere philanthropist, by his own repute—designing, yet weak; full of profession, yet empty, and not to be trusted; still terms may be made with him; he is a Peer, and hence my daughter may be induced to marry him,

though she does hate him, if I thwart her in the object of her choice. I should certainly like a peer for a son-in-law. But then this Lord Hollow has no money, and lives on his reputation for charity. Then there is Gloom, he is rich, but has no title; his wealth makes him miserable—he hates mankind, because he thinks the world has a design upon his pockets; yet he is as crafty as a Jew, with all his strange notions, none of which does he believe in; how he may answer my ends I must leave to chance. Then there is the Countess's man-of-fashion, Mr. Blandish, as insinuating as a musquito, and as dangerous as a viper: this last man I utterly repudiate.

Enter Servant, ushering in LORD HOLLOW.

SERVANT. Lord Hollow, my Lady.

LORD HOL. Good morning, my Lady Furnace! Have you thought of my proposal?

LADY FUR. I have, my Lord; but it cannot be settled until she is of age.

PHILLIS. [*at the side wing*] Ha, ha—I see, there's mischief going on, I'll warrant me. A lady's-maid's ears were made for a receptacle for family secrets, so I'll listen.

LORD HOL. Not until of age! Why defer it, my Lady, so long?

LADY FUR. To be candid, she can make no settlement upon me until then. You must know her poor silly old father settled nearly all his fortune upon Edith, and left me only a paltry jointure of two thousand a year—a sum totally inadequate to my style of living.

LORD HOL. No doubt, comparatively small; but still with prudence it might do.

LADY FUR. Might do—indeed, sir—I fear you have too contracted a spirit to be my daughter's husband.

LORD HOL. It might do certainly ; but, as you say, it is not enough for a lady of your condition—besides, your daughter ought to do a little.

LADY FUR. A little, my lord—do you mean to insult me ? With a fortune of “ five hundred thousand pounds ”—talk of a little—consider my claims upon her as a mother ; gratitude would say at least half. I am not a rapacious parent, I do not expect above a third : that much I have a claim upon her affections for.

LORD HOL. Give your consent, and as a religious man, when she is of age, I will give you all you ask, only consent to our immediate marriage.

LADY FUR. My Lord, I take no man's word, they so often prove untrue.

LORD HOL. My honour, my whole life is my pledge.

LADY FUR. Your pledge must be your bond, to be liquidated when Edith comes of age.

LORD HOL. [*aside*] What, if I divulge this to Edith ; would she feel grateful, or the reverse. I'll think of that by and by—in the meantime, I'll consent to anything.

LADY FUR. What is he muttering about ? My Lord, I wait your answer.

LORD HOL. Can't you take my sacred word of honour.

LADY FUR. Pardon me—no ; this is not a question of words, but of money ; an altogether different transaction—a matter of business. Do you agree ?

LORD HOL. Cheerfully, or I were ungrateful else—this is kindness.

LADY FUR. Go—take your chance ; you will find Edith in the drawing-room.

LORD HOL. Farewell for the present, best of women.

[*Exit.*]

LADY FUR. What a wretched creature, with all the will for rascality, without the intellect to carry him through without discovery.

Enter SERVANT and Mr. GLOOM.

SERVANT. My Lady, Mr. Gloom.

LADY FUR. Good morning, Mr. Gloom.

GLOOM. I cannot say as much.

LADY FUR. Well, Mr. Gloom, I hope you are very well.

GLOOM. Very indifferent, I don't recollect ever having felt worse.

LADY FUR. You look very well, robust, sleek, and hearty.

GLOOM. Appearances often deceive, and if I should marry, my declining health may be a good thing for my wife ; it would enable her to get a second husband sooner. Women are fond of change, and if no other good comes of my marriage it would settle the expectations of my hungry relations, who are as rapacious as half-starved wolves ; if they had looked after their own affairs instead of after me, they had been rich ; as it is, they have been starving on expectation, and at last they will die on it. If I marry your daughter, my Lady, she shall have all.

LADY FUR. If you have really serious intentions, Mr. Gloom, you must be prepared to make some sacrifices I must provide for. You are aware of the contents of my late husband's will ?

GLOOM. I am aware. What are your terms ?—the putter-up fixes the prices, the buyer has to make his bargain.

LADY FUR. Well, Mr. Gloom, I suppose you know that my daughter's affections have been sought by a

young nobleman, Lord Pyers Gayton—of course he could not but be attractive ; but you are a man of the world, Mr. Gloom.

GLOOM. Some men might object to a young lady who had given away her affections, but I am old, and my jealousy somewhat blunted ; her attachment would make a heir not a wit the more unlikely ; but still a woman with affections already disposed of is not so marketable—but name your price.

LADY FUR. I am not rapacious, Mr. Gloom, I am willing to take a hundred thousand pounds down ; or a bond for two hundred thousand when she comes of age ; in the latter case, you will not be paying with your own money.

GLOOM. Rapacious, oh ! not very ; words have various constructions.

LADY FUR. Oh ! there must be no difficulty thrown in the way ; no hesitation on your part. Let me observe, Mr. Gloom, Edith can command any husband.

GLOOM. I thought a thousand a year might have done.

LADY FUR. Mr. Gloom, leave my house ! Do you mean to insult me ? Is Edith only worth such a paltry sum as that ? I put a higher estimation on my daughter's excellences ; if she had neither beauty, accomplishments, or wealth it might have been different ; as it is, I wish you a very good morning.

GLOOM. Mitigate a little—one half—

LADY FUR. Not one jot. Pretty presumption, truly ; if my daughter is thought a fit match for Lord Pyers Gayton, what sacrifice must she make by accepting a man of Mr. Gloom's condition in life ? I know the true value of things as well as you ; besides, I may have no

children, and then Edith may at a distant period get all back again.

GLOOM. Very unlikely, and very distant indeed.

LADY FUR. You are pleased to be merry, it may be so; but—

GLOOM. But very unlikely, I should say; having a young husband.

LADY FUR. Between ourselves, he is a poor creature.

GLOOM. So he appears.

LADY FUR. Oh, dear me, Mr. Gloom! all men are not endurable; but to the point—then we may consider the negotiation at an end?

GLOOM. Not exactly.

LADY FUR. Do you consent?

GLOOM. I do.

LADY FUR. To the first proposition, of one hundred thousand down, or two hundred on her attaining her majority?

GLOOM. To the latter.

LADY FUR. Now, sir, you have full access to my daughter; I acknowledge you as a suitor.

GLOOM. [*aside*] If there is craftiness to be found amongst the greatest rogues in the creation, the lawyers, the bond shall not be worth a shilling. Good morning, my Lady. I'll go and seek Edith out, by your permission.

LADY FUR. You will find her in the drawing-room.

GLOOM. May no mishap overtake you before we meet again. [*Exit.*]

LADY FUR. At *last* I shall be in my true position; had this good fortune occurred earlier, I may have married a duke—rich widows have married dukes.

What a thing to put up with is Sir Fernando! Alas! it is no use repining.

PHILLIS. Ma'am, did you call me?

LADY FUR. What, hussey, brings you here? I half suspect you of listening.

PHILLIS. Me listen, ma'am? I have got a character to lose; I am no earwig, no violator of secrets—I, ma'am.

LADY FUR. I half suspect you. Go, find your young mistress, and tell her to prepare to receive morning calls.

PHILLIS. Yes, ma'am, I'll lose not a moment.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.—PARLOUR IN LADY FURNACE'S
HOUSE.

Re-enter PHILLIS, meeting EDITH in an opposite direction.

PHILLIS. Oh, Miss, I have only just time to inform you—expect Lord Hollow every moment. Your mamma has made every arrangement—price, possession, and all; and if he don't succeed, then you are to have that horrid wretch Gloom.

EDITH. I don't understand you—what do you mean?

PHILLIS. I have no time to tell you particulars; but your unkind mamma has set a price upon you.

EDITH. You presume upon my kindness—or you are mad.

PHILLIS. Neither one nor the other; but perhaps the truth is hateful, and my attachment for you is misplaced. [*Cries.*] I do love you, though you are my mistress. Poor servants' love is always treated with disdain.

EDITH. Can it be true?

PHILLIS. Do not believe me without you like; the fact must come as transparent as a looking-glass, though you like it or not. Hark! I hear the whining wretch's footstep. Shall I admit him?

EDITH. What shall I do? I am truly miserable.

PHILLIS. If I were to advise, treat him to his deserts, humbug him, and then laugh at him; use him as he does charity, as a cloak to your designs.

EDITH. I have a good mind to be revenged—I will. You may admit him.

PHILLIS. Do so, Miss; he will reveal his true character in good time. [*Knocking.*] Coming—coming.

Enter LORD HOLLOW.

PHILLIS. Lord Hollow, Miss.

EDITH. I am at Lord Hollow's particular commands.

LORD HOL. Ever good—ever charitable.

EDITH. You mistake me, I am downright selfish, I never give without the hopes of return.

LORD HOL. Cannot you give away your own beautiful self? Oh, if you could but know this heart.

EDITH. I think I do tolerably well. Ah, my Lord, you are a good creature—so disinterested—you are without a motive.

LORD HOL. So I am. No; there is one—only one. Oh, Miss Edith Le Merchant! love for you—

EDITH. Love me! I am overwhelmed with gratitude. You a patrician born, I a humble plebeian, the child of an honest chapman; can you forgive my descent, so far as to love me?

LORD HOL. Incomparable creature! I could if you were the daughter of a sweep.

EDITH. Generous nobleman, to be so prodigal of your sacrifices! If I were without a dowry—

LORD HOL. It would be my greatest happiness to elevate so much worth.

EDITH. Suppose I were by some chance to lose my fortune, or give it away?

LORD HOL. Better still, it would afford proof of my devotion; my supreme love of charity would then be vindicated. Washing-houses—and the Society Physiologue, to improve the masticatory and nutritive system of the lower order, thereby enabling a little food to do as well as much—of these I am the sole originator—I it was who introduced the plan to enable the people to live without labour, as part and parcel of my system of Physiologue Masticatory, of the committee of which I am chairman—to fifty humane societies I give my time without a murmur; by it I save my pocket, for I assure you it is not the most generous that are the most charitable.

EDITH. I do believe you; nor are they the most just; therefore, to carry out my hostility to charity, I to-day came to the resolution of giving all my fortune to my mother; in fact, unknown to her, I have done so, with the consent of my trustee—Uncle Mobels.

LORD HOL. Gave away your property! You astound me; it is like a cannon roaring at my ear, asking for admission to my brain. Truly you are joking!

EDITH. Not at all; for, being determined to try the disinterestedness of my suitors, I resolved to make a beggar of myself.

LORD HOL. [*aside*] Poor simple fool! But you are not in *earnest*?

EDITH. But I am.

LORD HOL. Then, madam, I wish you a very good morning.

EDITH. Stay a moment; is this your disinterested affection? you, who might have succeeded with a too susceptible heart, credulous to your professions of charity; you have inflicted—I won't say what? [*Cries.*]

LORD HOL. Well may you weep at your folly.

EDITH. Will you not pardon my folly? Recollect, it was to a mother who loves me.

LORD HOL. Impossible.

EDITH. Do, pray. [*Cries.*]

LORD HOL. I am amazed at your assurance; recollect your low condition—the disparity of birth.

EDITH. Never mind, then—Ha! ha! ha!—Mr. Gloom will have me, if you won't. I expect him here presently. Too credulous a lord, do you think a minor could dispose of her property? I leave you to yourself and your own bitter disappointment.

LORD HOL. Stay a moment, I can explain myself.

EDITH. No doubt you can; but I expect Mr. Gloom this very moment; I have no doubt I shall find him more disinterested. My Lord, can you forgive the cruel fraud I have played upon you?

LORD HOL. Can you forgive me, most incomparable of women? On my knees—

EDITH. I'll consider about it; the honour of marrying a lord is certainly great. But I hear Mr. Gloom's footsteps, it must not be known that you have been here, as he has promised me his fortune, and shortly intends to commit suicide; so, my Lord, get behind that screen.

LORD HOL. Must I?

EDITH. Else you forfeit all claim to my affection. I cannot afford to lose Mr. Gloom's fortune; so not another word—Go!

[*Rapping at the door.*]

Enter PHILLIS, ushering in MR. GLOOM.

PHILLIS. Mr. Gloom, Miss.

EDITH. Mr. Gloom, I am charmed to see you; you look so very happy and cheerful.

GLOOM. Ah! appearances are deceitful; I have lost my appetite, lost my sleep, and shall shortly be lost to this world; and as I cannot take all I have with me, I want a heir to my estate.

EDITH. Have you not near relations?

GLOOM. I have, but I hate them; they wish me dead every hour of their lives; would that I could see them all die at once upon a dunghill.

EDITH. Ah, Mr. Gloom, after all there is nothing like taking care of one's property.

GLOOM. What is life without it? a dog's life is better than a needy being—a cringing, poverty-stricken mendicant.

EDITH. I admire your principles; in fact, you are a man to be admired.

GLOOM. Beauty most exquisite, I never before saw you look half so beautiful. I could love you, Miss Edith.

EDITH. What can I desire more from a man? There is one thing, certainly.

GLOOM. What is that?

EDITH. A man's money. I am avaricious, and love money.

GLOOM. A prudent thought; and I want something, do you guess what?

EDITH. Not at all.

GLOOM. A wife to give my wealth to; a wife, such a one as you.

EDITH. Mr. Gloom, you overpower me; can it be, are you sincere?

GLOOM. Sincere? I could love you for yourself; but revenge on my poor relations so enhances your value that I would take you penniless.

EDITH. A great inducement, certainly; but what is the use of marrying without you get something by it?

GLOOM. If you marry me you shall gain by it; and to prove it, on our marriage I will settle everything I have upon you, absolutely; nay more, I will give up all I have to you, except three hundred a-year. How my rapacious cousins will then howl and clamour—what pleasure shall I have in seeing them miserable! The curs will then be ready to know each others' bones. Oh, they will not then be so greedy for my death. These will be merry times for me; I'll turn the tables upon them, I warrant me.

EDITH. How very delightful—is it not?

GLOOM. Exquisite, most exquisite.

EDITH. Your offer is noble, and on one condition I think I might venture—that, see whomsoever I may, it should create in you no suspicion; but then, suppose I was to prove ungrateful, and leave you, and run off with some handsome seductive wretch of a fellow?

GLOOM. There would be no occasion for that; I dare trust you, see whomsoever you will.

EDITH. You dare trust me?

GLOOM. I can, I will trust you; I believe you are more disinterested than your sex in general, therefore I would make you the depository of all I have got in the world. If I dared trust my feelings, I could love you with the ardour of a young man; but circumstances remind

me I am old—say, will you be mine? if you will, I will forthwith set the lawyers on.

EDITH. I must take time to consider, I am so overpowered with your generosity. Farewell, leave me for the present.

GLOOM. Must I?

EDITH. Yes, go now, and come to-morrow,

GLOOM. I go, and in the meantime I hope well will betide you; till then, farewell. [Exit.]

EDITH. Ha, ha, ha! I must have a good laugh. Step forth, my Lord. Ah! my Lord, you have heard all.

LORD HOL. No, upon my honour.

EDITH. Is it necessary that I should repeat Mr. Gloom's offer? Of course not. Now, what do you think of it? All his fortune, his delicate health, approaching dissolution! What do you think of waiting a while? A widow, with twice or thrice my fortune, may be thought quite as acceptable in a few years as I myself at present. I shall bear good interest. What say you, my Lord, cannot you wait?

LORD HOL. I had much rather not; a certainty is always best, and you may, after a lapse of time, change your mind.

EDITH. Certainly not; *my* mind is already fixed on an object; therefore, my Lord, you can call again to-morrow.

LORD HOL. Dearest of women, may I hope?—

EDITH. Certainly, you may hope.

LORD HOL. Will you be mine?

EDITH. You are too precipitate, you don't give time for my affection to assume a lasting impression. Oh, my

Lord, I had forgotten I have an engagement ; I shall expect to see you again to-morrow. Adieu.

[Runs out, followed by LORD HOL.]

LORD HOL. But—Miss Le Merchant—stop but a moment. She's gone, and I must go too. *[Exit.]*

END OF SECOND ACT.

A C T T H I R D.

SCENE I.—LORD GAYTON'S HOUSE.

LORD GAYTON *and* LORD PYERS, *alone*.

LORD GAY. We are alone ; I see the door is shut. I wish a few serious moments with you. I have ever been an indulgent father—have I not ?

LORD PYERS. You have, sir.

LORD GAY. And in regard for my parental affection, you would make any just sacrifice ?

LORD PYERS. Anything compatible with the affection I have for you. [*Aside.*] This is strange.

LORD GAY. Hear me, then. When I married, some months back, I was requested to make a provision for my wife. Must I tell you I could not, except one utterly inadequate to her station in life ? I promised, however, when you came of age, to see if some arrangement could not be made with you ; nay, I went so far as to promise, knowing your affectionate disposition : for I could not for a moment suppose you could be so ungrateful as to refuse. Will you, Pyers, make me happy ? I would not have asked you, but the Countess daily importunes me. You are this day of age, and, for the first time, you have the power, if you have the will, to make me happy.

LORD PYERS. I had hoped the Countess had not been so irrational as to suppose the son of the late Countess of

Gayton could ever forget the reverence due to his mother's memory. No, sir; she has stepped into my mother's bed, she never shall into her inheritance.

LORD GAY. Recollect, sir, your dependence is upon me during at least my life. You are at present totally unprovided for.

LORD PYERS. I am so now: in reversion the inheritance is mine; the estates on the paternal as well as the maternal side.

LORD GAY. I think, Pyers, it is a hard thing to anticipate a father's death. Is it not better that you should at once be independent? Come, Pyers, be generous and make some concessions, and I will be equally liberal.

LORD PYERS. If there was anything I could do, father, that would add to your individual happiness, you might command me. You have a noble income; what more can you desire?

LORD GAY. That you should enable me to make a settlement upon my Countess.

LORD PYERS. And thus I am to give away my inheritance, my mother's fortune, to clothe the naked, portionless woman who lies upon my mother's bed. The law gives me the inheritance in fee, and not a shilling shall she have beyond your life estate. Neither that woman nor her offspring shall take aught of mine. What is yours—a life estate—give her; what is mine—the reversion—I'll keep.

LORD GAY. Then not a shilling more you have from me. Go, live upon expectation—and starve upon it.

LORD PYERS. Deny me all my mother's portion? It is unjust—but, no matter.

LORD GAY. Sir, leave my house, and never more cross the threshold of my door.

LORD PYERS. Not while you live, perhaps, but the house is mine; you are only a life-tenant, and with life your occupation ends. But still you are my father—I would not part as enemies.

LORD GAY. Sir, begone—leave the house.

LORD PYERS. I leave you, until your infatuation is at an end, and you no longer the dupe of an artful woman. Father, farewell. *[Exit.]*

LORD GAY. So he has left me to reflect in the bitter disappointment of my heart, of my eternal misery. What an unjust law is this, which makes a son independent of his own father; the son that ought to reverence his father, beard him, and scoff at his counsel; but the reason is evident, he has that absolutely which I enjoy as a mere tenant for life; and the grandson, whom the donor, my father, never saw, inherits all his wealth; is this right that the grandson should be preferred to the son? Man, in the plenitude of his power, proud of his wealth, is unjust, and outrages common sense and justice by committing a fraud on his immediate posterity. Oh, my father, your pride has made me miserable and my son unnatural. This may be fatal to my happiness; the Countess expects the settlement which I promised her, but cannot perform—this is most grievous; how am I to satisfy her? I am most miserable.

[LORD GAYTON sinks into a chair, and appears in a profound reverie.]

Enter the COUNTESS.

COUNTESS. *[aside]* I heard them at high words; what could be the matter? My Lord! He hears me not. My dear Lord; what ails you, love?

LORD GAY. *[musing]* I am in a fearful dilemma; I

have taken a step of extreme rashness; I should have been certain first.

COUNTESS. What is the meaning of this strange inquietude, love? Why do you not speak to me? What am I to infer from it? Is there any difficulty in the consummation of your promise?—You hesitate! Tell me, has Pyers refused?—No answer! Am I, then, deceived?

LORD GAY. Ask me not, dearest love; I have not the resolution to tell you.

COUNTESS. Am I, then, a wedded pauper? And all this show and glitter is to pass away like an empty vision, leaving the bitter remembrance of a gorgeous dream of the glitter of a life of splendour passed under the canopy of old age! When thus young life is passed, and advancing years have obliterated all traces of youth and beauty; when the gaieties of life are passed, and the triumph of the sex is gone, what is left to me? Alas! poverty and abject humility is all that remains. My present settlement is a most miserable one.

LORD GAY. Yet it ought to be considered something by one who was portionless.

COUNTESS. It is nothing in comparison to the sacrifices of the heart; to blighted affections, and the loss of all sympathy.

LORD GAY. And must I endure all these cruel reproaches? I must; for I fear they are too just. Oh, misery, misery! I am indeed an old man, and you a young woman; the fact stares me ghastly in the face, mocking me with sad derision; I fear there can be no sympathy between us. Listen to me, dearest Euphemia. My income is large. Electioneering has heretofore swallowed up no trifling portion of it; a fortune, a noble

fortune, may yet be accumulated. I am not an old man yet ; therefore, my dearest Countess, tranquilise yourself.

COUNTESS. Is my youth, then, to be spent in melancholy solitude ; and my hopes and feelings chastened as if I was a cloistered nun ? My Lord, I will not dissemble ; I married you to enjoy a life of splendour—gaiety and luxury were to supply the place of affection ; talk not, then, of retrenchment. Had affection been my object in marrying, perhaps my choice would not have been the same.

LORD GAY. Madam, this is a most cruel wrong.

COUNTESS. Not a greater than you committed when you took me to the altar.

LORD GAY. Oh, heavens ! I do now know my weakness. Could a man turned of sixty expect affection from a mere girl ? The truth rushes to my brain with unopposing force. I am most wretched. Dear Countess, I love you, dearly love you, therefore do not torture me by raising suspicions in my mind.

COUNTESS. Why, my Lord, did you marry me ?

LORD GAY. Because I loved you.

COUNTESS. Can you really love me ? No ; love is too confident to suspect. I would have you believe me true ; I may be gay and volatile, charmed by young men's conversation ; I will be faithful to you ; but beware, my Lord ; do not suspect me.

LORD GAY. I am wrong ; I will never more doubt your honesty, and, believe me, I will endeavour to make you happy. Come, will you retire ?

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—A PARLOUR IN AN HOTEL.

THORPE *seated in an arm chair*, MUGGINS *standing*.

THORPE. Knave, what wantest thou to make thyself more happy?

MUGGINS. Marry, many things, good my master; one thing especially.

THORPE. And what is that, knave?

MUGGINS. Sometimes I could relish a flagon of your sack. Not being the steward of your worship's cellars—

THORPE. Is there aught else?

MUGGINS. On a verity there be. Seeing I shall never grow rich with thinking on it, sometimes methinks I should like a rich wife, and withal, one passing beautiful.

THORPE. Knave, thou art an epicure, thou hast a dainty palate—a choice stomach of thine own; methinks a flagon of October and some stout milking wench might serve thee; thou art a cunning knave.

MUGGINS. Master, thou wrongest me; I do not object to October, if it be strong, smacking of malt and hops; strong stomachs require strong drinks. I thank my stars, noble master, I am no degenerate tea-drinking teetotaller—I am no innovator in that respect. Give me something warm, to bustle through a raw cold day; you are then above the weather—independent, quite, of it.

THORPE. Right, good Muggins. Dost not thy soul revolt against the late temperance act, and thy spirit abhor the temperance movement?

MUGGINS. On my soul it does; if it were the last true words the law ever allowed me to speak again, I do swear eternally I do hate them laws.

THORPE. Old England, forsooth, has grown a tea-drinking old woman. Degenerate days are these! The bear-gardens long since deserted, the noble pastime of cock-fighting put in abeyance. By my immortal soul, a foul act of Parliament that, that has done away with those noble pastimes. These are degenerate times, indeed.

MUGGINS. The cocks are turned upon the dunghill, and the game birds are now only fit for the spit.

THORPE. Then what is to become of our famous dog, the emblem of Old England? He, too, must be expatriated. There's humanity for you.

MUGGINS. Transport the inoffensive bull-dog—shame!

THORPE. All the ancient amusements of the people are gone; a man, now-a-days, is not allowed to kill himself in a pitch battle without transgressing the law. And what is the substitute?—railroad and steam-boat excursions for the body, and lectures and newspapers for the improvement of the mind, instead of the ancient usages. I say the people were better off when they were serfs, they were then honoured by their lord.

MUGGINS. Ah, honoured master, those were days! and I have often heard them say your revered parent honoured my mother. O, he had an eye to the flesh; and I never found that any ill came of it, as I do affirm on my veracity.

THORPE. Thou art a rogue—an errant knave; I love to hear thy humour. In the days of yore the Thorpes were all fond of the women; there is nothing like those good old times.

MUGGINS. One thing may be good, honoured master, that is not old, saving your favour.

THORPE. What is that, knave?

MUGGINS. A woman. On a verity, I would take a young wife before I would an old one.

THORPE. What if the dame be of ancient lineage?

MUGGINS. If she be of ancient lineage, if she be old, what is she the better of her old age? but if she be a peasant wench, young, ripe, and full of blood, blooming with health, and her face lit up with mirth, she is the delight of your eyes; and as to her eyes, they are like unto the lights of heaven, that kindle such a flame that warms you up, and makes you steal a kiss, unasked, from those rosy lips that hide that fond persuasive tongue. Give me the lass; whose fragrant breath doth not pollute the air; give me nature, young and blushing, whose face conceals no image of her mind. I loves nature, even when she is in rags, and not another ornament on her back but what nature has given her.

THORPE. A moraliser, by my troth. Muggins, thou wilt surely come to be hanged. What, hast thou turned incendiary? What, hast thou dared to think for thyself? Have the admonitions which I have given thee been thrown away?

MUGGINS. Honoured master, no; but of a verity a tree will be known by its fruit, though it be planted among briars and thorns. A man be a man, according to my reckoning, though he be born in a stable; and an ass is an ass to my thinking, foaled in a house, and fed upon human provender.

THORPE. I see thou has caught the contagion! Have a care, I warn thee.

MUGGINS. What contagion, honoured master ? I feels no ill.

THORPE. Of learning to think and judging for yourself.

MUGGINS. Why, if I ha' I must ha' drawn it in with my mother's milk. I am sure, honoured master, I never sought it out ; it must o' come of my hearing of your excellent discourse ; ears will pick up as pigs do acorns.

THORPE. Have a care, Muggins ; learning is a dangerous thing. What says the Poet—"if ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise."

MUGGINS. I say, saving your honour's presence, that Mr. Poet was a natural fool. Ignorance is like a man with his eyes open on Salisbury Plain, on a pitch dark night, they be then no good to him. A man is blind without he has sense to guide him, morally speaking ; and he that is blind in mind knows not right or wrong, and wickedness is the same to him as virtue ; wisdom must needs guide a man over a safer track in life than ignorance ; wisdom is like the stars of heaven to the mariner, it safely directs him through the tides and tempests of life.

THORPE. Fool ! cast that demon from your mind.

MUGGINS. What demon, honoured master ? I pray your leave.

THORPE. That self-satisfied judgment of your own. What right have you to a private judgment ?

MUGGINS. Nature, honoured master, has given it me. Nature hath been bountiful to you ; it has not shorn you of your beard ; Nature having given you much, surely I may expect a little ; wherefore that natural growth of beard, may I ask, saving your honour's pardon ?

THORPE. It is the badge of mine ancient race, a distinctive trait of a race of hunters and warriors.

MUGGINS. And of a truth I inherit my little knowledge from either my father or mother, or perchance from my grandfather or grandmother, if ever I had either, which I know not, as their names have not come down to me; I'll search the parish register, and see if I had any forefathers.

THORPE. Silence, knave, and listen. I have a secret, Muggins—I am in love.

MUGGINS. Craving familiar leave, with whom, noble master?

THORPE. With the sweet Edith Le Merchant, the daughter—shall I say it—of a base trader.

MUGGINS. Base trade begets pure gold without dross. Is she beautiful?

THORPE. Report says transcendently so—a perfect angel, with a mind as pure as the dewdrops of heaven.

MUGGINS. Not seen her! Would it not be best to see the lady before falling in love?

THORPE. No, base varlet, my imagination has done all that; I have already seen her, in all her thousand charms. I have a mission for you, trusty Muggins; hie thee to sweet Edith's dwelling, and solicit of her maid, her prudent confidante, to deliver this missal to her.

MUGGINS. What missile? I would not hurl a stone at her, or yet misuse her, for the world.

THORPE. Thou art a silly knave; know thou, that a missal is what is vulgarly called a letter—a word—smelling of the counting-house.

MUGGINS. Of what parentage doth Miss Edith Le Merchant come, honoured master?

THORPE. Thou art not a discreet squire, or thou wouldst not ask that question. I am guilty of a weakness, it is true, honest Muggins, in falling in love with a low-born maid ; but love has made me blind in vowing eternal fidelity to her I love. Oh, Edith, were thou but of pure and ancient blood I should be satisfied.

MUGGINS. I think that matters little so that she be young, rich, and beautiful, and of wholesome flesh and blood ; to my thinking a woman's blood might be just as pure if she was of new fashioned blood as old fashioned ; old blood sometimes wants renovating with new blood, especially if the estate has much run out. I have heard that citizens' money before now has patched up many an old house.

THORPE. Good, but my estate is free. How I despise base trade.

MUGGINS. Yet methinks base trade brings many comforts, and dingy artizans oft get bright beauty ; what matter the source, if the stream be pure ? It be no worse thought of, though it do come out of the dirt, and is as good water as if it came out of a crystal fountain. Methinks, if Miss Edith—excusing my weaker intellects—was a chimney-sweeper's daughter, she might have as fair a skin as if she was the daughter of a baker ; and if I was a great gentleman, I had as leave marry her as the hunched-backed daughter of a duke.

THORPE. Hast thou dared to feast thy impious thoughts upon those above thee ?

MUGGINS. Not irreverently, noble master ; but I can no more help feasting my eye on a beautiful duchess than I can my mouth, when hungry, upon a piece of roast beef. The lord looks with a profane eye on the peasant's

daughter, and dang me if it is not hard if a poor man may not be allowed to obey his natural instinct, by looking with the same feeling on a rich beauty.

THORPE. No more, Helot—you fill my mind with fury. How dare you think?

MUGGINS. I crave your pardon, noble master; how will you prevent a poor man thinking?

THORPE. Scourge it out of him.

MUGGINS. He will then think, and his thoughts will be on revenge, and his mind burn with hatred.

THORPE. What, doth a dog dare to hate?

MUGGINS. No, a dog does not, because he either forgets or knoweth not his wrongs, or, like man, perchance, feigns love from fear; but still he may hate.

THORPE. Thou art a fool; no more vapouring, I'll not have it. Now listen, knave; take this missal, and demand of her fair tirewoman an interview of her young lady, and mark me, when thou approachest her, bend thy stubborn knee, and say it comes from Thorpe of Pogis, one of the Knights of Young England, descended from a race of Saxon warriors. Away.

MUGGINS. I go, noble master. [*Aside*] Poor master, he is swollen up with vanity, as a bladder is with wind; quite strange, and off it.

THORPE. What art muttering about? Begone, quickly.

MUGGINS. Nothing, good master, I was only thinking to myself what a fortunate circumstance it is to be rich, and be able to please oneself.

THORPE. No more; thou art a fool for wishing it.

MUGGINS. May be so; yet many a wise man hath

wished for the same thing before now. I am glad your worship despises riches.

THORPE. No more, begone.

MUGGINS. I go with the speed of a candle when snuffed out. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE III.—PARLOUR IN MOBEL'S HOUSE.

EDITH and MOBELS.

MOBELS. What brings you here thus early, Miss Edith?

EDITH. Uncle, dear uncle, if you knew how I needed your advice you would not be surprised; I am miserable, my home is wretched.

MOBELS. What can make it so?

EDITH. The sordid avarice of my mother; she wishes to sell me and sacrifice my happiness.

MOBELS. Surely you wrong your mother; some one has deceived you.

EDITH. I wish it were so, but it is painfully too true; even now she is in treaty with those odious wretches, Lord Hollow and Mr. Gloom, and is ready to sell me to the highest bidder.

MOBELS. This is the consequence of a middle-aged woman marrying a young husband; it is to spoil him she does it. Never mind, be of good heart; no ill shall come of it, trust me.

EDITH. Thank you, dearest uncle; yet still I am miserable.

MOBELS. What else can make you miserable?

EDITH. I am in love.

MOBELS. That should be a source of happiness : as love brings with it hope, so does hope bring with it pleasing expectancies.

EDITH. But I have brought on him the displeasure of his father, who has turned him out of doors.

MOBELS. Never mind that, if he is worthy of you he shall find a home within my doors.

EDITH. Indeed he is most worthy, uncle. Do you forgive me, dear uncle ?

MOBELS. There is no crime in love, it is what few people can help getting into at some time of their life. What is his name ?

EDITH. Pyers Gayton.

MOBELS. The son of a very proud man, and the inveterate enemy of men like me, who have risen by our industry ; but that has nothing to do with the young fellow, he may be well enough. I judge not of men by their caste, but by their principles.

EDITH. I am sure, dear uncle, he is all that you could wish ; so generous, so noble, so disinterested.

MOBELS. Well, well, perhaps so ; you, at all events, ought to think so ; but let me see him.

EDITH. So you shall, uncle. I have a secret, will you be cross if I tell you ?

MOBELS. I cannot promise, it will be according to your deserts. What have you to say ?

EDITH. Why, to tell you the truth, I have already invited Pyers to meet me here.

MOBELS. You do a little surprise me.

EDITH. I knew you would forgive me. I have a project, too, uncle ; and what do you think it is ?

MOBELS. I cannot imagine; I am not sufficiently acquainted with young ladies' affairs to guess.

EDITH. Then I propose lending Pyers as much money as he requires, and you are to advance it for me until I come of age.

MOBELS. So—so! Why you surely have not promised any? He would not be mean enough to accept assistance from a young lady.

EDITH. Nothing of the kind, uncle. I do not intend that it shall come from me; you must be the lender, and when I come of age you can deduct it from my fortune. Oh, uncle, I know you will be a friend to him, because he loves me so devotedly, and I am sure I do him; and, dear uncle, do not wait until he solicits your assistance, but urge it on him with all the delicacy and eloquence imaginable, and my obligations will be to you greater than I can express.

MOBELS. Edith, love, you are the child of the greatest friend I ever had; I would do much for your own sake, but more, if possible, for the reverence I bear for your father's memory. When I was a young man, working my way up in the world, your father took me by the hand; I was then a little printer, just rising from the rank of a journeyman; your mother was then a little orphan, the child of my step-father, whose dissolute life soon put an end to my poor mother's. Well, I brought her up and educated her well, and as she bloomed and grew to womanhood I had risen in wealth; fortune had prospered my industry, and I had become the friend of my patron, who hereafter was to be your father. Your mother was proud to become the wife of the honest merchant, because he was rich; but I loved the man for his integrity. Well,

so it happened ; I, who had been a printer's hack, became the brother-in-law of one of the first City merchants, who was more esteemed by men for his moral worth than for his wealth. Well, my fortune rapidly rose ; I became the promoter of a newspaper, it prospered, and has been the means of my doing, as I do believe, much good ; and I may say that I never yet employed a poor scholar in the literary department, but that it proved a means of raising him to a higher station : and has been the road to office and distinction. Having the power, in some measure, to direct the public mind, I might have abused that power by traducing private character ; but I have rather sought man's intellectual elevation, and his physical good, than his debasement. Never have I made my journal a vehicle of slander or the tool of a party ; my motto has been, "Mankind—its good, and not its evil."

EDITH. I must cry—[*cries*]—because I am a woman ; you have aroused my sympathies. Women, uncle, cry as well for pleasure as for pain. Uncle, dearest uncle, I am prouder of you than if you were born a noble, or had won fame by military glory ; I shall never be ashamed to hear it spoken, that my uncle was once a poor printer's boy. I feel myself so elevated by your worth, and so ennobled by your understanding, that to be allied to plain Citizen Mobels is to me a greater distinction than if I were descended from a long line of illustrious ancestors. Uncle, I love you ; dearest uncle, bless me. Your spotless integrity ought to make me good and noble-minded.

MOBELS. Bless you, bless you ; I no longer regret being childless, though it has been the bane of my life. Bless you, bless you, my child ; I am growing foolish too.

EDITH. I must now leave you, uncle ; I shall be missed else at the breakfast-table.

MOBELS. If your mother, Edith, will persist in making you miserable, come to me ; here you have a home, such as it is—homely, it is true, but hospitable.

EDITH. I will, dear uncle ; and when Pyers comes say I could not stay, and be sure and do not forget the money, it will make him so happy. Good bye, uncle.

[*Exit.*]

MOBELS. She is certainly a very admirable young woman, whom any parent might be proud of. I had rather she had fixed her affections upon some honest tradesman's son ; but virtue, like vice, don't belong to caste, but rather to individuals ; there is good and bad in every grade of society.

Enter SERVANT, ushering in LORD PYERS.

SERVANT. Sir, a gentleman wishes to speak with you.

LORD PYERS. Good morning, sir. Mr. Mobels, I presume.

MOBELS. The same. Your business, I presume, is with my niece ?

LORD PYERS. Yes, sir, and you, too ; I wished to consult with you.

MOBELS. Exactly, after the mischief is done ; very imprudent to make an appointment with a young man ; however, she has returned to her mother. Won't you sit down ?

LORD PYERS. Thank you, sir ; I feel delighted in so doing. I should feel honoured under any circumstances in making your acquaintance, but your friendship now is of the greatest value to me.

MOBELS. You must prove yourself worthy of it before you enjoy it.

LORD PYERS. I will try and deserve it, sir. I now require your advice.

MOBELS. I don't know what good that can do you.

LORD PYERS. You must know, then, that I am tenderly attached to your niece.

MOBELS. I have heard as much; but if you are so thoughtless as to marry her, how do you intend to maintain her?

LORD PYERS. There is the difficulty; I would marry Edith to-morrow, if she would have me; but then how to get the means to support her, there is the difficulty; it is true my expectancies are certain and ample, but how to raise money on them at present I am at a loss to know; yet I must either do that or comply with my father's unjust demands, of making a settlement of half my fortune on his wife, the Countess.

MOBELS. And so you refused to make a settlement on the woman?

LORD PYERS. I did, point blank. I know I can get money by going to the Jews; but that is curtailing my inheritance. I would not make a beggar of myself willingly, much less for Edith's sake; I should not like to see my old patrimony encumbered, much less sold.

MOBELS. Why not? it is just as good in another man's possession as yours.

LORD PYERS. True; but then I have an attachment to it; besides, it is not an estate of my own creation, therefore I have no right to dispose of it—it would not be honest of me to do so; yet for Edith I would make any sacrifice.

MOBELS. Have you the mother's consent?

LORD PYERS. I have not, nor am I likely; there is a difficulty in the way, not to be overcome.

MOBELS. What is that?

LORD PYERS. I have no money.

MOBELS. Go and borrow some; ask the Jews, and if they won't lend you any under five per cent., I will.

LORD PYERS. Will you, sir? then there is no use asking the Jews, for they will want at least twenty-five per cent. If, sir, you will lend me five thousand pounds, I will marry Edith without anybody's consent but her own.

MOBELS. That must not be.

LORD PYERS. I had forgot; and yours, sir.

MOBELS. You must have Lady Furnace's consent too; I cannot be instrumental in severing the ties which ought to exist between parent and child.

LORD PYERS. Sir, I fear to obtain her consent is impossible; do not, sir, crush my hopes.

MOBELS. I would not; but I would preserve that example which should govern the conduct of the child towards the parent; wait but a short time, and all will be well; I think I can remove Lady Furnace's objections.

LORD PYERS. Can you, sir? then I may hope.

MOBELS. It may take time, but you may, sir.

LORD PYERS. Sir, you make me happy, and in gratitude I will try and make Edith a good husband. Sir, excuse me, I will fly to Edith; if possible, see her, communicate our mutual happiness, and try and exist upon hope till we are married. Good bye, sir. *[Exit.]*

MOBELS. Good day to you. He appears a generous young fellow, and I think will make Edith a good husband; still it will do him no harm to make him wait a little, and try his constancy.

SCENE IV.—LADY FURNACE'S HOUSE.

LADY HAVALL *and* PHILLIS.

PHILLIS. My young mistress will be with you presently, my lady.

LADY HAV. Stay a bit, wench, I want a word with you; answer me truly, and I'll find a guinea for you.

PHILLIS. La, ma'am, you hit the true spring that will let the secret out. [*Aside.*] She wants to pump me, but she has laid hold of the wrong handle.

LADY HAV. Now tell me, which of all her lovers does your young lady most affect—is it Mr. Gloom, or Lord Hollow, or Lord Pyers?

PHILLIS. Certainly not Mr. Gloom, nor yet Lord Hollow. Ah, poor thing, she is doomed to disappointment; but don't mention it pray, ma'am; good places are scarce. Lord Pyers is proud of his blood, and won't marry any but a title; but don't tell my young lady.

LADY HAV. I admire your discretion; fear not. Then you are sure Lord Pyers won't marry her?

PHILLIS. Certain, ma'am—quite positive.

LADY HAV. But may not Lord Pyers love her after all? May not youth and beauty blind him to the objections of her low birth?

PHILLIS. 'Pon my word, my lady, I would not deceive you, on no consideration, after your generosity. Oh, my lady, I am of such a grateful, thankful disposition.

LADY HAV. Here, my wench, is two guineas for you instead of one.

PHILLIS. Oh, my lady, shall I go down upon my knees and thank you ?

LADY HAV. No, girl; no occasion.

PHILLIS. If Lord Pyers did but know of the nobleness of your disposition. I don't like to be officious, but do allow me to tell Lord Pyers.

LADY HAV. Thou art a sensible girl, and hereafter I may make it five. I won't tell thee to do it; but be discreet, and look to me hereafter.

PHILLIS. I will, my Lady, punctually.

LADY HAV. Yes, there may be a chance; for I will tell you plainly, and in confidence, Doctor Boloram has promised to make me look forty years younger. I was once a beautiful girl, as thou mayest guess, or I had not got four husbands in my time. If I can look young again, I have no reason to despair of making Lord Pyers my fifth.

PHILLIS. No, you need not. Listen, here comes my young mistress. [*Aside*] I must try and inform her what has been going on.

Enter EDITH.

EDITH. Good morning to your Ladyship.

LADY HAV. Well, Edith love, what news ?

EDITH. Nothing as I hear of.

PHILLIS. See, see, my Lady, there's a naked man in the street.

LADY HAV. Where, where ? Let me see—how very shocking !

[*Goes to the window.* PHILLIS *whispers to* EDITH.]

LADY HAV. Where, wench ? I can see nothing of the kind.

PHILLIS. [*aside*] It was not very likely, if I did not, that your old eyes should. La! ma'am—he has got out of sight.

LADY HAV. Very likely, very likely. It is a pity I did not see the rascal. Was he lusty, and well proportioned, girl?

PHILLIS. Very, ma'am.

LADY HAV. Hum! I warrant me there were plenty of young girls looking after him.

EDITH. I am shocked that you should think so.

LADY HAV. Shocked! pooh, fiddle-de-dee! There is no harm in thinking, it is in the doing; think what you please, and no harm comes of it—but do, and woe be the consequences.

EDITH. Really, now I look at your Ladyship, I vow you appear twenty years younger.

LADY HAV. [*aside*] Ah, then the Doctor is all right. Well, I'm glad you think so. Well, Edith, and you look tolerably well, as well as may be expected; and you may have yet an honest, plain, worthy husband, suitable to your birth and condition in life, or some needy nobleman, perhaps, whose estate is low.

EDITH. I hope so.

LADY HAV. There is Mr. Gloom, he is rich; but what think you of Lord Hollow? there is a nobleman for you; it is true, he is but a poor drivelling creature, but then he has a title, and that covers all imperfections in the eyes of vulgar citizens.

EDITH. It is true it does sometimes, but not with me, I assure you; I despise them both.

LADY HAV. Then there is my kinsman, Lord Pyers Gayton; if he should offer himself—if he should condescend to compromise his rank and dignity—

EDITH. Oh, Lady Havall, you distress me; he does not think of me.

LADY HAV. [*aside*] The wench is right. Yet the world did give you to him.

EDITH. Ha, Lady Havall, I have no hope; you are a widow, you have experience on your side, you have rank and station—what chance is there for me?

LADY HAV. As you say, very properly, I have station; it is very discreet in a young lady of your large property, with some pretensions—with some pretensions, I say, to beauty—when she knows her true position. I really think I must patronise you; I'll introduce you, Edith, and some old man of family may, by my representations, be induced to marry you.

EDITH. Oh, thank you, Lady Havall, how very kind of you. [*Aside*] What an old fool!

PHILLIS. Miss Edith, Lord Pyers is below; shall I show him up?

EDITH. Oh, my Lady, I feel so sick, I declare I shall faint. [*Aside*] I will retire, and listen; it will be excellent sport. Yes, yes, Phillis, do. [*Retires, (R.)*]

LORD PYERS *enters, (L.)*

LADY HAV. I will commit myself to him; he is so shy and diffident.

LORD PYERS. Good morning, Lady Havall; I expected to have seen Miss Le Merchant.

LADY HAV. Ah, poor thing, she felt herself rather unwell, and has just retired.

LORD PYERS. Indeed, you alarm me.

LADY HAV. Oh, nothing of moment; only a little disappointment, that is all.

LORD PYERS. I fear I may be the consequence ; I am past my time.

LADY HAV. Ha, very likely, but that is of no consequence. Pyers, love, I want to have a little serious conversation with you ; I have spoken to your father, and he has no objections—none whatever.

LORD PYERS. To what, my Lady ?

LADY HAV. You shall hear presently ; I am sorry there should have been any differences between you and your father, but it is always the case when an old widower with children marries a young wife ; for my part, I never did marry a man who had children ; so, as I was saying, this has caused a breach. Never mind, my dear, I have money ; I'll supply your wants. What cash do you want ?

LORD PYERS. I really don't know ; I am fortunate in having been provided with some, so I will not trouble your Ladyship at present.

LADY HAV. Call me by a more endearing name ; call me my love, or dear, or by my christian name, Araminta—there is not so great a disparity in our years.

LORD PYERS. There is certainly not a very great disparity in our years.

LADY HAV. Truly, and if your father is unrelenting you know where you may always find favour ; you have it in your power to make yourself independent ; I will be a solace to you in your distress. Ask what you will of me, and it is yours.

LORD PYERS. Thank your Ladyship, but I have a bank to draw upon ; but I may yet stand in need of a friend.

LADY HAV. Never, if you are wise; I have an independence to offer you; you look so handsome I could not refuse you anything.

LORD PYERS. [*aside*] The old wretch is surely making love to me: I'll try her.—Except your dear self.

LADY HAV. [*aside*] I see I have him.—Yes, perhaps, except myself; and why should I refuse myself? It is true, I have two or three offers; there is Lord Hollow, a pious soul, he might satisfy some hungry women, I positively refused him. Still I could love, Pyers, with as great an ardour and sincerity as ever I did in my life, if the man pleased me.

LORD PYERS. [*aside*] The old beldame is growing warmer and warmer. I'll humour her; this may do as a blind, to allay the suspicions of Lady Furnace, for if I give her hopes, Lady Furnace cannot help knowing it. [*Speaks aloud*] If I should succeed in gaining the affections of this incomparable woman, what is to become of poor Edith?

LADY HAV. Leave the hussey to her fate; let her go, and mate with her equals. A fine thing, to aspire to rank and nobility, such as she, indeed! She smells of bales of goods and bills of lading. Look at me, love; can you confide in me?

LORD PYERS. I look upon you, and am overpowered—[*aside*] with loathing and disgust. I will fly from you—[*aside*] as from a tallow chandler's shop in July. I go, I leave you in a fit of agony—[*aside*] of laughter. I leave you in despair—[*aside*] of your ever recovering your lost senses. You are immaculate—[*aside*] because no one has any wish to make you otherwise; and lest you may

misplace your affections, I fly from you—[*aside*] as from a hot flaming furnace in the dog days. [*Exit.*]

LADY HAV. Gone, and left me; without so much as a kiss! What a foolish young fellow to be so shy; he'll know better by and by. [EDITH and PHILLIS *appear at the side wings.*] What a thing the tender passion of love is; how one longs to get rid of it—well, well, he will make me a husband to my delight; the most delicate of the whole lot. When I get him for a husband, I'll soon cure him of his bashfulness, I warrant me. Well, well, the Doctor's charm has worked to a miracle; I must go and tell him—so I must. [*Exit.*]

[EDITH and PHILLIS *cross the stage after her, laughing immoderately.*]

SCENE V.—LORD GAYTON'S HOUSE.

COUNTESS and BLANDISH *seated, and alone.*

COUNTESS. Heigho!

BLANDISH. You sigh, dear Countess; what can be the cause?

COUNTESS. It is of reminiscences of the past.

BLANDISH. Why recal the past? Look to the glowing future; you have everything to anticipate, nothing to despair of—no wish need go ungratified, no desire uncontrolled; every thought satisfied, in secret, too. You have the best box at the opera; the gayest, most fashionable acquaintance, and equipage unrivalled.

COUNTESS. And a husband old enough to be my

father, who has a son old enough for my husband. Believe me, it can be no joy to a young wife to link her destiny to an old husband—if he attempts the lover, his assiduity is repulsive; if he is indifferent, you are disgusted at his want of feeling; if you are seen with him at the Opera, you are made a mark of, and a subject for derision; if he is absent from you, the purity of your morals are questioned—in short, in marrying an old man, you are accused of the most sordid avarice and unalloyed selfishness; represented as a creature of self truly ignorable. And, after all, what is splendour purchased at such a price? what is it, but the mean and despicable gratification of triumphing over your acquaintance? But what do you lose by all this? In one word, your happiness; and that, too, for ever.

BLANDISH. Dear Countess! Cast all those sad reflections to the winds; why should you deny yourself happiness? If you love not him, you may love another; I am still as devoted to you as ever.

[Attempts to take the Countess's hand.]

COUNTESS. Desist, sir, I shall be angry. Recollect wedlock is a sanctuary, and must not be polluted.

BLANDISH. What is marriage but a barbarous institution to protect the rights of the usurper, who has trampled upon the affections of another? Is not there something glorious in retaliation? Hear me, Euphemia—on my knees I swear eternal love.

COUNTESS. Leave me! Begone, and do not tempt me—and never more return.

BLANDISH. If I must leave you spare me one embrace.

[BLANDISH seizes the COUNTESS by the hand.]

COUNTESS. No, no; [*faintly struggling*] you must not—think of my vow; for all the splendour of the world I would not.

BLANDISH. Nay, by Heaven I will.

COUNTESS. It is very wrong. [*spoken musingly.*]

BLANDISH. That is impossible, your feelings tell you it cannot be wrong; our feelings, which is a part of our nature, justifies it. Thus, dearest Euphemia, I clasp you in mine arms, and stamp my love upon your lips.

[*Enter LORD GAYTON suddenly; the COUNTESS screams.*]

COUNTESS. [*to herself*] I am as one dead, and, though innocent, as one convicted of a great offence.

LORD GAYTON. What is it that I have seen? Can it be a false vision—a delusion of my brain, to raise up phantoms of jealousy in my breast? No, no; alas, it is too true!

BLANDISH. Good morning, my lord; it is a positive pleasure to see you. You, my lord, reverse the order of things by growing younger, which is quite apparent, by your taking to yourself a young wife.

LORD GAY. I do not understand your familiarity: villain. Leave my house. What! do you hesitate?

[*LORD GAYTON rings the bell violently.*]

Enter Servants.

Kick this obtrusive scoundrel out of doors.

[*Servants seize* BLANDISH.]

BLANDISH. Are you positively in your right senses?

LORD GAY. This effrontery is unendurable; away

with him, and if he resists pitch him head foremost out of doors.

BLANDISH. [*struggling*] This will require an explanation! By Heaven you shall be made to repent. Recollect your reputation is in my keeping. [*Exit.*]

LORD GAY. Away with him, I say—begone. [LORD GAY. *seats himself; a long pause follows, the* COUNTESS *the while standing.*] Could she be a consenting, willing party? May I hope: or is peace of mind for ever to desert me?

COUNTESS. How is this to end? Alas! I know not.

LORD GAY. She seems overwhelmed with confusion; shall I trust myself to speak to her? Euphemia! [*Euphemia spoken so inaudibly as not to be heard by the* COUNTESS.

COUNTESS. My Lord!—He hears me not. Shall I justify myself? My Lord!

LORD GAY. I can endure it no longer. [*Rushes out.*]

COUNTESS. He is gone, and I am lost. Where shall I fly to conceal my infamy? Alas! to my wit's-end; I know not where else; and there obliterate from my mind my shame, in my distempered brain—where shall I go? I fly—I know not whither. [*Rushes out.*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT FOURTH.

SCENE I.—OUTSIDE LADY FURNACE'S HOUSE.

MUGGINS; PHILLIS *afterwards appearing at the window.*

MUGGINS. This be the house, the mother's house, Lady Furnace's house; and the young lady I see popping her head out of the window. [PHILLIS *at the window.*] The bright morn to you, sweet young lady; I bears a missle with me, commonly called a letter, from my noble master, the Lord of Pogis. Thorpe be his name, a squire of landed acres, and I his faithful vassal.

PHILLIS. What means the boor? I want none of your missles; I'll call the police, and send you to the station.

MUGGINS. I rob not, I harm not; it is not a weapon that I bear about me, but a civil letter of love. My master, in plain language, I do assure you, is in love; and what is more with you, young lady: he is a gentleman, though a somewhat strange one, who, hearing of your beauty, is raving mad about it.

PHILLIS. [*aside*] I see, Mr. Lubin mistakes me for my mistress. I'll carry on the deception.—Must I receive it?

MUGGINS. If you would put your lovely little fingers out of the window, and charge them with the carriage of the contents of this letter to those beautiful eyes of thine.

PHILLIS. Must I? I think I dare not trespass so far on my modesty.

MUGGINS. Do, please, Miss; it will do your modesty no harm, I assure you.

PHILLIS. Give me it, then; now begone.

MUGGINS. When may I call for an answer?

PHILLIS. You may call, but as to an answer I'll consider about it.

MUGGINS. You mean thereby to say you will; when shall I call again?

PHILLIS. Call to-morrow, or when you will; now go; else my mamma will see us.

MUGGINS. I go.

[*Exit.*

PHILLIS. Ha, ha, ha! this is some strange gentleman, I'll be sworn. Here comes my mistress.

SCENE II.—A PARLOUR IN LADY FURNACE'S HOUSE.

Enter EDITH and PHILLIS.

PHILLIS. Oh, Miss, such an adventure has just happened, I have been mistaken for you. I must be lady-looking, or that could not have taken place. Well, as I was saying, as I was taking the air through that very window, such a strange-looking lout came up, with such strange apparel on, and such old-fashioned quaint language, that I thought he was mad; not so mad, though, did he turn out to be, as I could afterwards perceive; and la, ma'am, will you believe it? he put this letter into my hand.

EDITH. It was very imprudent of you to take it.

PHILLIS. Well, Miss, I can return it unopened, as the fellow returns for an answer to-morrow.

EDITH. Certainly you might, but, strange to say, you have excited my curiosity, so we may as well read it. [*Reads.*] "Essence of perfection,—A knight of ancient lineage, to whom rumour hath brought tidings of your unrivalled beauty and purity of soul, wishes to break a lance for the fair fame of Edith Le Merchant, though alas! the days of chivalry are passed, and it is rare in these degenerate times to find a true knight; but, be it spoken by me, there yet remains one, a descendant from the valiant chieftains of old, the Lords of Pogis, yclept Young England. Therefore, fairest lady, I subscribe myself, until death, your devoted slave, THORPE OF POGIS, a Knight of Young England.—My trusty knave, the Saxon Muggins, waits for your gracious answer."—Ha, ha, ha! Capital! I have heard of this same knight, a fantastic gentleman, who believes everything of the present day is out of order and viciously wrong: who has sworn by the exuberance of his beard to restore the ancient regime. Phillis, girl, I have a plot; you shall marry him.

PHILLIS. La, ma'am! consider, he has never made love to me; he has done nothing whatsoever to win my affections. Think of the violence I shall do to my feelings.

EDITH. Oh, pooh, nonsense! You must, you shall. He is, I believe, a very fine, manly-looking fellow, and would do very well but for his monomania.

PHILLIS. Think, Miss Edith, by your insisting, what violence you commit on my affections. Oh, Miss Edith! do you, though, insist? If you do, as a good and faithful servant, I must not resist; for, you know, obedience is a servant's inheritance, as well as her duty.

EDITH. Resist! why you would not run away from a

good husband? He is rather Quixotic, it is true; but that don't matter.

PHILLIS. Not in the least. That don't matter, if he is a fine noble fellow, with an affectionate disposition. But think of my conscience, Miss; how am I to get rid of the qualms? It will be such an imposition, to get a husband by a clandestine robbery; I might get prosecuted for petty larceny.

EDITH. If he sees you, and is perfectly satisfied, how can he object to you afterwards? it is only the change of names, and a man can love a woman as well by one name as another. If he does believe you to be me, how can he feel disappointed when he finds out who you really are? As he professes to admire me for my beauty alone, so he must you for the same reason after making his election.

PHILLIS. That is very true, Miss.

EDITH. Very good; then you agree to marry him?

PHILLIS. Your logic cannot be refuted, your arguments are unanswerable. If I do wrong, Miss, remember the moral turpitude must be with you.

EDITH. Agreed; no one can censure me after you are married.

PHILLIS. Well Miss, I consent; I resign my fate into your hands!

EDITH. You must then copy a letter, which I will write, as the spelling must not be bad, appointing the time you are to meet; you must, with my dresses, pass as my double; I will dress myself in boys' clothes, and pass as your lover, to stimulate the knight on, and drive him to elope with you; in the meantime you may as well throw this letter into the way of my mother; it will put her on a wrong chase.

PHILLIS. Oh, Miss! what deceptive creatures us women are.

EDITH. Or how could such poor weak creatures ever be able to contend with such powerful antagonists as the men; it is by the light artillery of our wit, and not by heavy argument, that we succeed; we must conquer by feints, not by a *coup-de-main*.

PHILLIS. As you say, we win by just gently tapping, and quietly insinuating.

EDITH. Just so. I expect another lover here presently—a new one, a friend of the Countess's.

PHILLIS. Mr. Blandish, I suppose, Miss?

EDITH. The gentleman; or the something else.

PHILLIS. The gentleman; or something else, the villain! Of course you summarily dismiss him, or he may cause jealousy. He is one, Miss, that will make as much of an interview, as ten other men could, by daily visits, the year round; and would soon give the world to understand that everything was settled, except his own consent.

EDITH. That I believe; therefore, to give appearances their true colours, I have written to the Countess, to show her what a fool I can make of her lover; he shall not leave me without his full deserts, trust me. I hear the Countess's step; quick, Phillis, and show her in. [*Enter the COUNTESS and exit PHILLIS.*] Good morning, Countess. Pardon my taking the liberty I have, but I wished you to see the sort of explanation that I intend giving to Mr. Blandish.

COUNTESS. Name not the wretch to me; I ought to hate him. You may be now happy, Edith! I am, alas, no longer a bar to your happiness; I am most miserable.

EDITH. Countess! dearest Lady Gayton, you distress

me: at the same moment you would make me happy, you cloud my mind with sorrow for your grief. What can be the cause of your unhappiness?

COUNTESS. Through the wickedness of that wretch Blandish, I am already separated; lost to my husband for ever!

EDITH. You surprise me! more so, as I momentarily expect Mr. Blandish here.

COUNTESS. Beware of him, Edith; let not your young heart be deceived by his plausibilities; he would marry you to get rid of his debts.

EDITH. How very considerate he is to himself; but he will soon learn that I despise him, and can make him a creature of ridicule.

Enter Servant, showing in Mr. GLOOM.

GLOOM. Angel, I came to rescue you from the avaricious jaws of a spendthrift, who has already devoured what fortune he had, and has promised yours to his creditors.

EDITH. How very generous, to give away, what at present does not belong to him; who may this gentleman be, Mr. Gloom?

GLOOM. Blandish; but I'll take care he does not get married for some time, at least; I have that against him that will provide comfortable quarters for him for some time to come; if not exactly a place to his liking—it is the place for his deserts. I'll teach him to interfere with me again; that is if it wont interfere with Miss Le Merchant's serenity of mind.

EDITH. Not in the least; but do not be cruel, Mr.

Gloom ; his punishment can afford you no happiness, and may make him miserable.

COUNTESS. Let him be miserable, he has made me so.

GLOOM. It is, dear Miss Le Merchant, for your sake, and yours alone, I do it ; to keep the villain out of your way—[*aside*] for he has a smooth tongue, and may be in my way.

EDITH. I hear some one on the stairs ; it is Mr. Blandish's time. Will you retire behind that screen ?

[COUNTESS and Mr. GLOOM retire behind the screen.]

GLOOM. Good.

Enter PHILLIS and BLANDISH.

PHILLIS. Miss Le Merchant—Mr. Blandish.

BLANDISH. Allow me, Miss Le Merchant, at once to throw myself on your confidence—may I hope ?

EDITH. For everything you please, Mr. Blandish—doubtless, for instance, a castle in the air, a splendid establishment, a retinue of servants, or the like—Mr. Blandish should have all these fine things ; it is monstrous that a gentleman of his refinement should be without them ; but then one cannot have all one desires—can we, Mr. Blandish ?

BLANDISH. You have the power to confer upon me all I wish for on earth.

EDITH. Indeed ! What, has the Countess lost all her influence ?

BLANDISH. I assure you she never had any ; a vain silly woman, in love with me, perhaps, but I gave her no reason to suppose that I felt anything of the kind ; I am not ambitious of her affection. Miss Le Merchant, you alone inspire my love.

EDITH. How little ambitious you are—what a mere trifle to seek for.

BLANDISH. Too great, I assure you ; I would not wed a duchess if I could have you, dear Miss Le Merchant ; my expectations do not wander beyond you.

EDITH. But what will become of the Countess ?

BLANDISH. The world has said strange things of us—don't believe them ; she herself, doubtless, has set the rumour abroad. She is too susceptible ; I cannot love a woman that is too susceptible.

COUNTESS. [*aside*] Oh, the monster !

BLANDISH. What is that I heard ?

EDITH. A pet kitten of mine, amusing herself behind the screen.

BLANDISH. Pretty kitten. Miss Le Merchant, will you hear me ?—I am devoted to you—I swear eternal devotion.

EDITH. Fie, Mr. Blandish ; I am surprised you forget the poor Countess.

BLANDISH. [*aside*] She is jealous—she will do. Thus I throw myself at your feet.

EDITH. Hush ! do you hear any one ?

BLANDISH. No, dearest ; it is your heart beating, that is all, though you may not know it.

EDITH. I expect Mr. Gloom here presently, my mother greatly favours him, and he has made a most honourable offer, which I have partly made up my mind to.

BLANDISH. Nay, don't. What, must that Malthusian old usurer, whose father kept a slop-shop in the Minories, and was expelled in early life from Rag Fair for cheating a Jew of Jack Ketch's perquisite, the worthy undertaker of Newgate,—and whose son once, as I am told—the

present Mr. Gloom—was a candidate for that exceedingly profitable office of the Castle of Newgate? I believe avarice is hereditary in the family of the Glooms, for I understand the present Gloom, the son of the late candidate for the honours of the office of undertaker to Newgate, has, on several occasions, sold himself after death to the apothecaries for dissection; he is now commonly known by the faculty as old bones—it a fact, I assure you.

[The COUNTESS and GLOOM come forward.]

GLOOM. Is it, indeed?

COUNTESS. Sir, have I the honour of seeing Mr. Blandish?

BLANDISH. Ah, Countess. Mr. Gloom, is it you?

GLOOM. Your eyes don't deceive you, nor do my ears.

COUNTESS. Nor mine—villain!—false man!

BLANDISH. Have a care, Countess; you may irretrievably ruin yourself. I am not naturally malicious—but some ladies have a respect for their reputation.

COUNTESS. Your threats I despise; and you, sir, are my abhorrence.

BLANDISH. You seem to anticipate. Positively, any one would think that the ruin of women was my chief pursuit in life, and the destruction of the fair fame of woman was my delight; it is nothing of the kind, I assure you; only occasionally, when a lady will interfere—Countess, you understand.

COUNTESS. Have a care, sir; I have a husband.

BLANDISH. A very jealous one, and one, perhaps, not very young or very agreeable. I dare say he is very passive.

COUNTESS. Monster! what would you insinuate?

BLANDISH. That *we have not been* less intimate than the world gives us credit for.

COUNTRESS. Is, then, a woman's reputation to be made the sport and pastime of such a villain? Mr. Gloom, you have heard him.

GLOOM. I have, and you will shortly have the consolation of knowing that he will have to sport with your reputation in a somewhat more confined sphere; the doors of the Bench are open to receive him, and I suspect Newgate won't long be disappointed of his presence.

EDITH. Mr. Blandish, your conduct is infamous—an outrage on humanity—leave the house.

GLOOM. Ah, do, some one waits for you outside.

BLANDISH. Adieu, Countess: you shall shortly hear from me. Gloom, what do I owe you?

GLOOM. The Officer will tell you.

BLANDISH. I have not a sous to pay you, so I leave you to meditate on your losses. Ha, ha, ha! [*Exit*

COUNTRESS. Oh, wretched, wretched, woman! I have no solace—no hope.

EDITH. Dear Countess, be not miserable; the villain dare not trifle with your reputation.

COUNTRESS. I am innocent; but he may make me to the world appear guilty.

GLOOM. He may, that is the truth; but before long his confessions will be with the gaoler of Newgate, and in a short time I have no doubt they will have to be made in Botany Bay; the rascal has forged my name.

EDITH. Earl Gayton has a son, and for my sake I do think Pyers Gayton would resent any insult offered to his father's wife. Will you retire, Countess, and compose yourself? [*Exeunt* COUNTRESS and EDITH, *leaving* GLOOM.

GLOOM. [*aside*] So, so; I hear my chance is out; Lord Pyers is the man. Well, I am glad it is not Hollow, the canting hypocrite; if I am beat out of the field it is by a good man—that is one consolation. Good day, ladies; I perceive I am losing time. What! have they gone?—dear me, how quickly they have removed themselves. I'll after the rascal Blandish, and see him safely lodged. I have been a candidate for Ketch's office, have I, Mr. Blandish? Oh, the liar; I'll teach him to make free with honest men's names. [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.—DOCTOR BOLORAM'S HOUSE.

LADY FURNACE *and* DR. BOLORAM, *seated.*

LADY FUR. I wish to consult you, Doctor.

DR. BOL. I know you do, my lady; and what is more, I divine the purport of your visit.

LADY FUR. Can it be possible?

DR. BOL. Your husband is cold and unimpassioned; is it not so?

[*TOOL appears at the side wing listening.*]

LADY FUR. In some respects, Doctor, he is not the man I took him to be for a husband; he certainly is not so affectionate as I could wish him to be.

TOOL. [*aside*] How the devil should he? It is impossible to love two at a time.

DR. BOL. I know it; yet it is strange, he is young and vigorous; there must be a cause—does your ladyship discover any reason?

LADY FUR. Not any, I assure you.

TOOL. No, nor you won't any; you women of the middle time of life are blind to your age; middle-aged wives wont admit their own imperfections, though their young husbands soon find them out; old women aint suited to young men, that is the cause of all this.

DR. BOL. I have been considering what to do; I'll mesmerise him, with Mesmer's potent spell; in the mean time, I would recommend your Ladyship to discharge every young woman that is passing good looking, and substitute blear-eyed old ones. Young women frequently possess mesmeric principles, like electric eels, and impart their influences to the feelings of young men; ah, and even to old ones too. It is one of the mysteries of nature, which I alone of all men can interpret.

Enter TOOL, hastily.

TOOL. Cannot it, though? Oh, what have mine eyes not seen! All has been a delusion; but it is all at an end now, and I am ready to confess myself an impostor.

LADY FUR. A what?

TOOL. An impostor; a liar to the backbone.

DR. BOL. Villain, you dare not.

TOOL. You be the willain; I be the wictim. Did not my eyes see it?

LADY FUR. What did your eyes see, fellow?

DR. BOL. Do say, if you dare. [*Aside*] Remember Newgate and this cane.

TOOL. I forgets all about Newgate, and dreads not that there cane. I alone can circumvent you, and you knows it.

LADY FUR. What does the fellow mean?

TOOL. That your Ladyship is undone. As for him, the Doctor, he knows nothing about it whatsomever ; I have been his earwig long enough, I now starts on my own account.

LADY FUR. What does the fellow mean ? Has any one robbed me ?

TOOL. Yes, I answers boldly, yes—there's the catch. What has been stolen ! Ask the conjuror what, the grave Doctor there.

DR. BOL. You villain, I'll cane you.

TOOL. Don't make faces at me ; I'm plain with you, and fears you not, two can play at caning. My Lady, ask the cunning man—the conjuror there—what has misfallen you, and see if he can tell you. No, he wont, ma'am, or my Lady ; you will find his science all humbug. I heretofore have collected his facts, which he has worked upon to his own gains.

LADY FUR. Good Doctor, what has happened in my household ? Dear Doctor, pray inform me ?

DR. BOL. Rascal, explain yourself ; tell her Ladyship what has happened.

TOOL. I sha'nt, while you are by ; I don't profit by your information, and you sha'nt by mine. Where is my snacks of Lady Havall's five thousand ?

DR. BOL. Rascal ! I'll do for you. [*Raises his cane.*]

TOOL. Oh, come on with you ; two can serve at that game. Oh, your Ladyship, what did mine eyes not see. The Doctor, there—Mr. Sham, the impostor—perhaps he can tell you ; but I doubts. Ha, go along with you. What have you been doing ?

LADY FUR. Doctor, what have you been doing ?

DR. BOL. Upon my word, nothing. What aught do you know of me, rascal ?

TOOL. Nothing, I believe you ; your name shall henceforth be a nothing know—that you knows nothing whatsomever is certain. I have been your secret-hunter long enough ; and what have I got by going down area-steps and worming out family secrets ? Nothing—therefore, I begins to-morrow on my own account ; see here I have nailed the wig on. [*Takes off his hat and shows a powdered wig.*] And I, myself, to-morrow operates in St. James's on an attorney's clerk ; I gives up servitude for a professorship. My Lady, I knows a secret ; I dives deeper into human nature than the Doctor, there ; for I goes into basements, I gets secret thoughts by prying through key-holes and into windows ; I see who goes in and who goes out of the houses ; as for the Doctor there, he never penetrates lower down than ground floors. Oh ! my lady, I could unfold a secret confederation what would entirely undo you, and make you miserable for life ; prepare yourself for the very worst evil that can come upon you ; make up your mind to it, it must come sooner or later ; but, no matter, the secret is mine ; perhaps it aint worth the knowing—perhaps it is.

LADY FUR. Good heavens ! what does the fellow mean ? Has my husband suddenly fallen down dead ?

TOOL. Worser than that ; but don't distress yourself, my Lady ; your husband has not yet eloped : I assure you, upon my word and honour ; but, he has—no matter—nothing.

LADY FUR. A mistress, do you say ?

TOOL. I says nothing. I keeps my own confidence, and waits upon private families at their own houses, to suit their own convenience.

DR. BOL. Get out of my house.

TOOL. Ha, ha, ha! Doctor, if you be a prophet tell the lady what I see'd.

DR. BOL. Scum!—refuse of humanity! Remember—remember I it was who got you off transportation.

TOOL. Ha, ha, ha! a very respectable witness. Doctor, I go to show you up. My Lady, shall I wait upon you?

LADY FUR. Do, do; pray do, as soon as possible.

TOOL. I am off, and will wait upon your Ladyship as soon as you are at home. Doctor, you are at a discount. Ha, ha, ha! *[Exit.]*

LADY FUR. Doctor, good morning; I really feel so very ill, that I must leave you.

DR. BOL. But, my Lady Furnace—

LADY FUR. Another time, good Doctor. Good morning. *[Aside]* I begin to suspect this fellow; and the man to be right.

DR. BOL. Will you allow me to accompany you?

LADY FUR. No, Doctor; good morning! *[Exit.]*

DR. BOL. I'll after the rascal Tool, and try if I cannot lodge him in gaol; trump up some tale of robbery—Softly—softly—cautious, Dr. Boloram. Tool knows too much—I'll after him, and see what persuasion will do.

SCENE IV.—PARLOUR IN LADY HAVALL'S HOUSE.

LADY HAVALL.

LADY HAV. I expect Lord Hollow here presently; he forsooth would be my fifth, and if I cannot get dear Pysers, I must put up with him; he is a sorry wretch, it is

true; but then he is young and not bad looking; and may do for a makeshift; besides, he is strong and vigorous, and if I cannot get a better one, why I must put up with him; besides, Dr. Boloram is so slow in his operation, that I begin to think he may have been practising on my credulity, and, after all, I am not to be young again. Never mind, I'll have a husband; for all that—I have no time to lose. I'll just go to my boudoir, and take a few glasses of eau-de-vie, to put me in heart to bear with the whining, dismal, hollow creature; but if ever I should have him, I will cure him of his melancholy distemper, I warrant me; when he gets some of my port and claret he will be an altered man. *[Exit, (L.)*

Enter LORD HOLLOW, (R.)

LORD HOL. They told me I should find her ladyship here alone; no matter, it will give me time to think. I am not certain of Edith Le Merchant—on the contrary, I doubt of my success; therefore there is no reason why I should not keep Lady Havall in good humour,—she certainly wants me. She is old, it is true, but then her life is less long; she is ugly too; that is of no consequence, where there is neither love nor riches. I cannot like the superannuated beldame the less for her want of beauty:—hush, I hear her heavy tread, she is coming.

[Re-enter LADY HAV.

LORD HOL. Good morning, my Lady; you look charming; quite young and blooming.

LADY HAV. Is that all that you have to say?

LORD HOL. Not by a thousandth part; when we get more united.

LADY HAV. *[aside]* Why dont the fool embrace me?

I must encourage him. Ah, lack-a-day, time, my Lord, is heavy to a lone woman, who has been in the enjoyment of a husband to comfort her; when she has no husband, it is grievous dull with her—very grievous.

LORD HOL. And why should the admirable Lady Havall be longer without a husband, when there are those who are positively dying for her, and who only wait an opportunity to be endeared to her by those affectionate ties that life alone can sever; whose charitable dispositions would be blind to everything except love and duty?

LADY HAV. There are those, it is true; but then there are few of them who are honest now-a-days; the young fellows are quite worn out by dissipation before they are fully ripe: a vigorous puberty in this degenerate age is very rare. There are women, young guilty creatures, that corrupt the young fellows' morals and ruin their constitutions; a proper manhood now-a-days is really scarce; and what is to become of us women eventually, who are of a proper age for marriage, I know not!

LORD HOL. Yet, dear Lady Havall, there are men—only a few, truly—who have hardly dared to look at a woman, much more inhale the breath of one.

LADY HAV. Because they are worthless, else they would get married. I myself much doubt, with my experiences, if such a man would be worth anything at all.

LORD HOL. And why not?—there are those that are perfect saints.

LADY HAV. I want no saints; give me a man with the one thing needful, the constitution and the spirit of a man, with the will and inclination of a man to please a woman. Ah, I hate your poor, drivelling, spiritless creatures.

LORD HOL. Oh, Lady Havall, you speak truly : mine is a love most lasting—I could adore.

LADY HAV. I am glad to hear it ; it promises well.

LORD HOL. I love a woman, as if she was an angel of Paradise.

LADY HAV. And who may she be like ?

LORD HOL. I warm at the very thought.—Yourself, your adorable, incomparable self, whom four husbands have already worshipped—you !

LADY HAV. [*aside*] Upon my word, he begins to look interesting ; but he is not Pyers Gayton—but he might do. You joke, my Lord ; you are pleased to flatter me. It is true I am not what I was ; but there are some plants which are evergreens.

LORD HOL. You never looked so beautiful as now,—never ; I swear it, never. You are no ephemeral, that buds, and blossoms, and perishes in the hour ; your youth and beauty cannot fade, it lasts with you. I will not say you are perfection, but as far as human nature goes :—ah, give me the full-grown form.

LADY HAV. [*aside*] The Doctor may be right, after all ; I may have grown young again.—Oh, my Lord, you have quite agitated my nerves. [*Aside*] He is certainly a very silly young man, but he has good properties, which might be improved upon ; he has got bone and sinew, and might do.

LORD HOL. [*aside*] She is communing with herself, deliberating whether she shall accept me or not. I must be desperate.—Oh, my Lady, you will make me a great sinner ; I shudder at the very thought, the wickedness makes me tremble ; I shall commit a murder if you refuse.

LADY HAV. A murder ! a what ? [*Aside*] Surely he

is mad, as well as silly. I must cry out for help—help, help!

LORD HOL. Not on you, dearest of women, but on myself; on my knees I pray you to spare my life; it is in your keeping. Oh, Lady Havall, my life is in your power; either consummate my happiness, or tell me to commit suicide.

LADY HAV. It is not me, then, you mean to murder, but yourself. Now, tell me in plain terms what you do mean?

LORD HOL. Is my attachment so opaque that you cannot perceive it? Dear Lady Havall, I am in love with you, and you alone; my existence depends upon your decision. I cannot—I will not—live without you.

LADY HAV. You men are so mercenary, so selfish, so cunning, so designing, there is no believing you; suppose I had not got the fortunes of four husbands, would you then marry me? Ah! answer me that.

LORD HOL. Heaven knows I would; I am a religious man, and I hope a conscientious one. I seek not of this world's goods and chattels. Am not I the apostle of charity?

LADY HAV. Ah! ah! that may be very well; but it is a great comfort to have the means wherewith one may indulge in. I say men are not as they were in my dear first husband's time, who left me all his fortune; they have no confidence in us: he, dear soul, left me every sixpence he was worth in the world, and desired me never to part with it as long as I lived:—poor soul [*weeps*]. I have religiously obeyed him; and from each of my three succeeding husbands I have insisted on a settlement: not exactly insisted, they have honourably come forth and voluntarily offered to make one; and if I should marry again,

my own fortune must be at my disposal [*a pause*]. What was you going to say, my Lord? I only throw this out as a hint—that is all.

LORD HOL. [*aside*] She cannot live many years.

LADY HAV. Not, my Lord, but that I should leave my husband everything I had at my death.

LORD HOL. She is rather too young.

LADY HAV. [*aside*] What is the fool mumbling about? Oh, my Lord, you need not hesitate, there are others: Lord Gayton has proposed for his son. I am not a commodity that is to be huckstered and hawked about like pedlars' ware; therefore, the sooner—

LORD HOL. I take you at your word, and will settle all—do anything you will—I am your slave for life.

LADY HAV. [*aside*] Easier than I expected. Then you really do love me for myself alone?

LORD HOL. Let one chaste kiss answer for me.

[*Gently kisses her on the cheek.*]

LADY HAV. [*aside*] A very poor one. Libertine, consider my morals. I think I am in danger.

LORD HOL. Not in the least.

LADY HAV. [*aside*] I think not, too. Come, my Lord, do we understand each other?

LORD HOL. Perfectly, my dear Lady Havall. Yes, quite, my love.

LADY HAV. Now, leave me, dearest; I must to my toilet—come again, presently.

LORD HOL. One more chaste salute, ere we part?

LADY HAV. There, there, take it. [*Aside*] Very chaste, indeed. Now leave me, dearest.

LORD HOL. I do leave you in the most anxious suspense. Farewell, angel.

LADY HAV. Farewell, dearest. [*Exit LORD HOL.*]
I feel quite low and exhausted ; my nerves have been taxed too much. I must go and refresh myself with a few more glasses of eau-de-vie. It is an excellent specific for languor.

SCENE V.—A PARLOUR IN LADY FURNACE'S HOUSE.

Enter EDITH, dressed in men's clothes, followed by
PHILLIS.

EDITH. Phillis, don't you think I look a beautiful little fellow? I fancy I should make a capital soldier.

PHILLIS. Of the female brigade; you would be a dangerous creature in the enemy's camp.

EDITH. Pshaw! something more than that—see my symmetry?

PHILLIS. Excellent for a page in an opera.

EDITH. Ha! for a cavalier!

PHILLIS. For a cavalier at a masquerade, to show off all that belongs to you.

EDITH. To fascinate the eyes of the women.

PHILLIS. Except with envy and jealousy of your superior attractions.

EDITH. Why don't they put pages on the stage, to win the hearts of the ladies?

PHILLIS. Nothing of the sort, Miss; it is to let the men have an insight into our pretensions. La! Miss, do you think your pretty little feminine strut would do for the women? Your jaunty gait and side-long glance would not please a woman; a woman wants something more

like a man; the women would no more fall in love with you, than a man would with a boy in women's clothes; you show yourself in boys' clothes, all that a woman should look like; nothing like a man, in no sort of proportion, Miss, whatsoever.

EDITH. Then the Knight of Pogis will perhaps find me out?

PHILLIS. Not a bit of it, Miss! his mind is so filled up with knight errantry, that he will take you to be a page, or a petted cousin. Ladies of yore, Miss, you know, always had cousins, whom they were tenderly attached to; only strut, fume, swagger, breast him, challenge, and defy, and you will be all right.

EDITH. Suppose the Knight of Young England should break out into a frenzy; what will become of my womanhood? in my fright I might betray myself.

PHILLIS. He is too generous to quarrel with his fair one's kinsmen; besides, you look a mere boy; he would not consider it valiant to quarrel with a boy. List, I think I hear his signal—the crowing of a cock; a bird which in knight errantry signifies fidelity.

EDITH. I'll retire—admit the Knight, and when you “hem” I'll appear, and shall know my office.

[PHILLIS goes to the window, and opens it.

PHILLIS. Hist! hist, Sir Thorpe; my mamma has locked me in; the window is very low—can you scale it? would you do so gallant an act for me?

THORPE. I would, beatified, immaculate beauty! Young England can surmount anything for his chosen fair; if it was a church steeple, I would ascend it, leave alone a ground-floor window; castles with frowning ramparts have been scaled ere now.

Enter THORPE.

PHILLIS. Noble—generous minded man! yet withal, you are cruel to take me from my mamma. I do repent, sir Knight. Hem! I'll cry aloud for help!

PHILLIS *cries "Help" very softly*; *Enter EDITH.*

THORPE. Softly! softly, dear.

EDITH. Who cries for help? By Heaven it is my love—my Edith—my life—my soul! Ravisher! what want ye here? Desist, and pollute not this sanctuary with thy vile presence; draw, I say, if you are a man; which I very much doubt.

PHILLIS. Oh! Percy, do not, dear; if you love me do not!

THORPE. Boy, put up thy tool; I am for man's work. I set not my lusty prowess against such beardless boys as thou.

EDITH. I could cry for rage, villain; but my aunt shall know on it: Miss Edith, your mamma will find you out, then the garret will be your prison; three pair of stairs will have to be surmounted, if you will admit the men.

PHILLIS. Dear Knight, what shall I do?—what is to become of me?—if he tells my mamma, a prison's my doom; an aerial dungeon up at the top of the house in the dark clouds of London? Dear Percy, be good to me; you are an affectionate boy.

EDITH. A boy, indeed; that is an insult! Let me inform you I have ceased to be a boy these two years past or more.

PHILLIS. Dear me! what is to become of me? I am lost, forsaken!—a prisoner, perchance for many a long and weary day.

THORPE. No! by Heavens I will free thee, though a legion of dragons encompassed thee! Stop, I'll secure the door, like a cautious chieftain. [*locks the door*] Fly with me, fair charmer; I will marry thee at nine to-morrow, at Gretna, by St. Stephen's clock!

PHILLIS. I dare not; you men are such deceivers.

THORPE. On my knees I swear to make you my wedded wife.

PHILLIS. You vow you will?

THORPE. Place thyself in my keeping, and I will prove myself a man.

EDITH. Oh! your mamma, Miss, will trounce you if you run away!

THORPE. Silence, boy! it ill becomes one of thy age.

PHILLIS. But they will follow us.

THORPE. Fear not. A carriage waits to take thee to the rail—those accursed innovating rails—but it is well for once; they will serve our purpose. Come, love—haste away.

PHILLIS. I believe I shall swoon, do support me; I am all in a tremble! [*Weeps*] You are sure you will marry me?

THORPE. I swear by eternity!

PHILLIS. Whatever my name might be?

THORPE. I swear; let your name be what it will.

PHILLIS. [*aside*] Then I must persuade him that Edith Le Merchant was only an assumed name, and that my father's real name was Toby Smith. Must I leave you, dear cousin Percy?

EDITH. Alas! farewell, dear Edith, sister of my adoption, once my love—farewell—[*cries*] I will not upbraid you, [*cries*] though you do desert me for another. [*cries.*]

THORPE. Poor boy, live to love, and be requited; turn thine eyes elsewhere. Come, fair one—gently; I will let thee down through the window.

PHILLIS. Give Percy the key; don't let us lock the poor boy in—you wont tell mamma, will you?

EDITH. No! though it breaks my heart. I will—if you would but cease to call me a boy. Farewell, Edith.

PHILLIS. Good bye, Percy dear.

[*Exeunt THORPE and PHILLIS.*]

EDITH. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! So, they are gone. Well, I myself have nothing to be glad of, for Phillis was a kind sensible girl, and though a servant, I esteemed her as a friend.

[*Exit, (L.)*]

Enter LADY FURNACE and TOOL, (R.)

LADY FUR. Come in, Tool, and shut the door. I thought I heard a noise here, as I entered, as if some one left by the other door—to make sure, I lock it. Now, what have you to say?

TOOL. I keeps my knowledge under the lock and key of my discretion—these lips of mine—until, like the Doctor, I can part with it to advantage. I lays no claim to miraculous invention; what I knows I larns by creeping down into areas and basements; I practises no largér-demain; impositions I abhors. What I deals in is family secrets, as the Jews do in old clothes. I pretends to no black art devination, mesmerism, or the like, except the public calls for it; then I do profess to practise those arts a little. You, my Lady, are not one of the weak-

mindful public, that believes in those air things. I do not profess to practise deceptions on a woman of your Ladyship's penetrating wisdom; what I says, is, there are causes for everything; and when you axed the doctor about Sir Fernando, he was as much in the dark as if he was born blind, because he knowed of no information to light him on the way; but I carries a candle that could have illuminated upon the subject; but the secret was mine, and if it was worth anything to him, it was worth something to me, so I resolved within myself—

LADY FUR. To be paid for your secret?

TOOL. Exactly so; or why else am I called a Tool?—but to be used profitably, it is true.

LADY FUR. You are discreet; and only let me know what it is, and I will reward you?

TOOL. I had an edication that taught me discretion; for, whenever I got found out, through promises of pardon, if I would tell all I know'd, their worships always severely punished me as a young rascal, forgetting all about it; so I am cautious of promises, as their worships always cautioned me, when they had made the most of evidence, and said it would be better for me not to have done so; yet I never could exactly inform my mind how that could be possible. Howsomever, let that be as it may, as the country has not provided me with more genteeler profession then that of a cheat, what can a man do, who has not got a better the wherewithal to do with. Only you encourage me, your ladyship; and you'll see how I can inform your mind of what is hidden secrets at this moment.

LADY FUR. There—there is five pounds!

TOOL. Don't your ladyship believe me without you like; not if it will make you in the least uncomfortable, or jealous; but Sir Fernando goes to see a lady.

LADY FUR. Where?—when?—speak out, and I'll give you a hundred pounds.

TOOL. Werry near the Opera house; and as to when most days that she allows herself to be at home to him.

LADY FUR. Now, are you telling me a falsehood?

TOOL. Ask your ladyship's own feelings. If occasion required it, there is such a thing as seeing the very fact; if a doorway admits Sir Fernando, and he walks into a lady's apartment, by her express will and pleasure; whomsomever can doubt the circumstance, who has got the blessing of a penetrating mind?

LADY FUR. Oh, monster!—the wretch!—but I will be convinced. Show me the house—show me the wretch; and name your reward, and you shall have it.

TOOL. I am not extravagant in my charges as the Doctor is, so suppose we agree upon double what you promised—say two hundred pounds?

LADY FUR. You shall have it.

TOOL. But then if he should afterwards elope with her, and I be the first to give you the correct account, and full information of the very fact, what then may I expect?

LADY FUR. I'll then give you three hundred.

TOOL. Your proposals aint by no means extravagant; but I am an economical dealing man, and accepts them.

LADY FUR. Go into the kitchen, and wait until I send for you.

TOOL. I will, and live there, and eat and drink, as long as your ladyship may have a mind to keep me.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE VI.—A PARLOUR IN LORD GAYTON'S HOUSE.

The EARL and COUNTESS alone; the former sitting melancholy, and the latter standing in a state of despondency.

LORD GAY. These are moments of painful silence, which I dare not break; intolerable grief chokes my utterance, and denies me speech.

COUNTESS. I will speak, though calumny doth shame my very utterance; my resolution is made up, and with despair and desperation I'll speak to him! My lord, I am no longer your wife.

LORD GAY. What say you—not my wife?

COUNTESS. When there is no affection, there can be no ties to bind us; the thoughts will wander beyond the pale of wedlock to other objects, and though propriety may keep one in the circle of virtue, still the heart will run riot, and the mind create images which morality doth not sanction. The law says I am your wife; but everlasting nature, stronger far than the fickle laws of man, informs my mind, and tells me I am no wife, and puts the shame of saying it to flight; yet truly, as Heaven knows, I am not guilty.

LORD GAY. I do believe you; then why should we part? Once dear to me, still dearer now, let us not part.

COUNTESS. The world hath slandered me; robbed me in licentious doings, and women as guilty in thought as me maliciously malign me. My Lord, I am grateful to you for this confidence; grateful for the fortune which you raised me to, but fate decrees that we part;

the reproaches of the world are too loud for mine ears to bear. I fly, my Lord, from the world to penitence and solitude, there to bury my griefs in the deep shades of silence.

LORD GAY. You must not, shall not leave me.

COUNTESS. What, live to be suspected? Impossible! I cannot endure the piercing eye of suspicion.

LORD GAY. The past has already fled from my recollection.

COUNTESS. The slightest quarrel would resuscitate the past; therefore, my Lord, we part for ever; at this very moment the carriage waits to convey me hence. I have my passport signed, and duly accredited, and in less than twenty-four hours I lose sight of the shores of my dear native land—must I say without weeping?—for ever.

LORD GAY. So soon, and for ever?

COUNTESS. For ever.

LORD GAY. Pause but for a day; leave me not thus abruptly; why will you go? happiness is still within your reach; why, then, leave me to solitude and anguish? The world will be an empty world and creatureless without you—a mere void to me, untenable and desolate.

COUNTESS. To a young wife with an ardent mind the time spent with a husband she cannot love, is worse than solitude; it is banishment from all the ties of nature. The mind of youth and age are not compatible, and are as opposite in their extremes as the intensest heat and cold. Youth is benumbed under the blighting shelter of old age; as the sensitive plant shrinks from the blast of the frigid winds, and dies for want of sympathy: the fire of youth is quenched and the tone of

joyous merriment dies away; like the song of the lark at the approach of winter: it is the sepulchre of nature. O! miserable youth, when thy lot is cast with age, nature is abused, and monstrous antipathies are consummated. My Lord, forgive me for thus rudely giving utterance to my thoughts—you know me now; I have spoken in truth, unfashioned by dissimulation—you know me now, and will be the better able to part with me.

LORD GAY. Is it so? Is this reality?

COUNTESS. Ask yourself—if, when in young manhood, you had wed a shrivelled beldame, most doatingly fond of you—fulsome in her love—what would have been your feelings? I answer—disgust; a loathing of her wanton wooings—ask yourself the rest. There is no dissembling now; we must part.

LORD GAY. You are ungrateful; I have settled upon you a noble jointure, fit for a Countess, and would have done more if circumstances would have permitted me.

COUNTESS. Take it back; I am sick of pomp and ceremony. Already, my lord, I have anticipated your wish; here is the assignment of my marriage portion, take it, and give it to your son; it was a portion of his mother's dowry, and never should have been mine. Oh, my lord, when I have gone, kindly receive your son, and say I humbly entreat forgiveness of him for the wrong I have done him. Here is the casket which you gave me; take them and give them to Edith Le Merchant, she will be a happy wife; tell her to remember me—perchance she may then—pity me—[COUNTESS *bursts into a flood of tears*]. I have written to Lord Pyers to say your house is open to him,—hark—I hear his step, then there is no time to pause—farewell, I can stay no longer. [*Exit.*]

Enter LORD PYERS. LORD GAYTON *is sitting in an apparent state of stupefaction.*

LORD PYERS. Surely I heard some one leaving the room?

COUNTESS. [*outside the door*] Pyers, farewell—you will never see me more—be kind to your father—tell him I am grateful. Farewell—for ever!

LORD PYERS. Surely that is the Countess's voice—I cannot be deceived. I will speak to her [*goes to the door*]; it is locked, and I hear her retreating step—what can be the meaning?—Father, speak to me—why thus silent?

LORD GAY. Is she gone, Pyers; has she indeed left me?

LORD PYERS. I hear the sound of a carriage; I will to the window—Countess, stay, I entreat you—no answer, a wave of her white handkerchief, the carriage retreats, and she is gone. Father, speak to me—rouse yourself.

LORD GAY. Unhappy old man. Fly with me, Pyers, and let us follow her [*cries*]. Come, boy—come, Pyers, help your old doating father—you may soon have to follow him to the grave. [*Exeunt.*]

END OF ACT FOURTH.

ACT FIFTH.

SCENE I.—A PARLOUR IN LADY FURNACE'S HOUSE.

TOOL discovered alone.

TOOL. What is a tool, but a doer of dirty work ? and what am I ?—let the world answer for me, for the world has made me what I am. The world calls me a rogue ; what has made me one ?—hard necessity. The streets were a cruel step-mother, yet they were the only parents I ever had or knew of ; my broughtage up was in St. Giles's rookery, and my present abode is in Gray's-inn-lane, which is werry near ; if not a rookery, it is werry near a fold of werry black sheep—Gray's-inn. I never had a friend, and all the world has been against me, and I against the world. My judges said I was a young rascal as soon as I could well speak, and told me I should come to be hanged. That is a lie—I may be transported, as I do live by cheating ; I cannot gainsay the truth on it, as do many of my betters ; they never do anybody any good for pure charity, and I never do any harm for mere malice. Gain is my object, not for the empty love of it alone, but that I may live by it ; yet I would not turn aside from doing a good action, if it cost me nothing ; but why should I tax my trouble or my good will ? Pshaw ! Why should I do even that much ? Who feels for me ?

Nobody. So I'll e'en oblige Sir Fernando at the expense of his wife's feelings. Well, well, even then I do the family some good, in getting rid of an encumbrance on their respectability; and if I did want a balm for my conscience, why her Ladyship has bribed me to make her miserable. But here comes the Baronet.

Enter SIR FERNANDO.

SIR FER. Well, my trusty messenger, what says my fair Dulcemara?

TOOL. Red hot with love, and ready to elope at a moment's notice; but the manager has bound down the foreign woman in penalties.

SIR FER. Woman!—lady, Tool, you mean. What penalties—what meanest?

TOOL. That she shall dance for no one else.

SIR FER. Not with me; I that have got an old woman for a wife—barbarous; if you knew, Tool, what it was to be tied to an old woman!

TOOL. I can faintly guess at that fact; but then the money, Baronet; but why did you not marry the daughter?

SIR FER. The latter was ignorant of my merit, Tool; 'pon my word it is a fact, she was; she had a vitiated low taste, Tool, not to be accounted for; no discrimination, or I may have made the creature happy.

TOOL. And yourself at the same time.

SIR FER. Exactly so; that is the bore, to be pestered with a middle-aged gentleman, when she has a fine daughter in the way; it is like the Gods offering nectar to the thirsty lips, and then drawing the cup away.

Horrid disappointment, always to be in sight of what one longs for, but can't have, eh, Tool?—but of the same little Opera dancer; touching the penalties.

TOOL. You must give her five hundred down to pay the manager.

SIR FER. Impossible! I have it not; the expenses of our travelling requires all; let her owe it.

TOOL. Your wife's jewels might be pawned very respectably.

SIR FER. Eh, ah!—respectably. I blush at the thought; but as you say they might be of service.

TOOL. I do but throw out the hint; your own good sense will show you the necessity of providing ample funds.

SIR FER. You reason, Tool, most rationally. I did not think you had so much in you.

TOOL. [*aside*] More than he suspects. Well, Baronet, the lady and her baggage are all in readiness, they only wait for you. Do you want, Baronet, to know where there is a most respectable pawnbroker's shop?—a gentleman that I have long been acquainted with.

SIR FER. It would be as well—Eh!

TOOL. Certainly, for sure.

SIR FER. Haste away to the dear creature, and say I will be with her as quick as my light steps can carry me; and in the meantime, Tool, I'll go and despoil her of what an old gentlewoman has no longer occasion for; to her they are mere superfluities—now, go quick.

TOOL. As fast as my legs can carry me; they shall be no hinderment in your way. What a turn those legs of mine have for mischief; they never fails when there is either sport or spoil in the wind. [*Exit.*]

SIR FER. Exquisite creature! for your sake I'll be revenged on my old wife.

Enter EDITH.

EDITH. Ah, Sir Fernando!

SIR FER. I cannot stay—I am in a hurry—I am going—I don't know where; so good bye. [*Exit.*]

EDITH. It is well he is gone; what should I have done else? Pyers is beyond his time; he writes to say there is no longer any obstacle in the way, as far as his father is concerned. He is past his time, and I dread lest my mother should return—(*looks at her watch*). My anxiety had outrun the time; it is some minutes yet. I am very miserable. Phillis, too, my confidante, who would have been a solace to me; she is gone. I hear some one on the stairs—can it be he?—how good, to be so punctual. I'll go to the door and meet him. Dear, dear Pyers, are you not shocked at my forwardness?

PYERS. Dear, dear Edith, will you pardon the warmth of my love? [*kisses EDITH.*]

EDITH. That I will, though it is wrong; but I will not be prudish. I believe in your faith; my love wont allow me to doubt your purity. I do love you, Pyers: I cannot dissemble.

PYERS. And why should you? Let to-morrow be the day; fly with me, Edith, and make yourself and me both happy. I have my father's consent, and nothing remains but a firm resolution on your part to consummate our happiness—fly with me.

Enter LADY FURNACE.

LADY FUR. Hey-dey ! So so, my Lord, you have again renewed your visits ?—fly with you ! No, my Lord ; she shall not fly with you ; leave my house directly, or I will send for the police to remove you.

LORD PYERS. Hear me, Lady Furnace ; I have my father's consent.

LADY FUR. Is not mine to be taken ? My daughter is under my protection, and she marries not without my consent ; I must be more vigilant. Edith, you are ungrateful—am I to be overlooked ? Wait until you are of age ; it will then be time enough, when you will be enabled to do justice to the wife of your late father, your mother, Edith.

EDITH. Mother, you are cruel, unjust. What want you of me ?—say, and I will give it you.

LADY FUR. A part of your fortune.

Enter MOBELS.

MOBELS. She shall not give it you, sister. I am her trustee, and can and will prevent it. You have sufficient, and if you have not, get rid of that worthless fellow your husband.

LADY FUR. Very well, brother—*[cries]*—you are conspiring against me ; the disobedience of my child is no longer to be wondered at.

MOBELS. Of course it is not ; when parents are silly and selfish both, how can you wonder at their disobedience ? Parents, sister, have their obligations as well as duties to perform. It is not your wealth that en-

riches this poor girl, but her father's, who worked for it, and got it by honest industry. Look, sister, what were you in infancy?—what are you now?—has not fortune been propitious to you? Shame—shame—to thwart your child in her first and only affection of the heart. Come hither, Edith; I love you, my child, for your own good self, but better for your father's sake, who was indeed a friend to me. Sister, I say she shall marry the young man. Nay, do not look at me with anger. Sister, do not forget yourself.

Enter TOOL.

TOOL. Oh, my lady! I brings the news which you desired me, when it happened.

LADY FUR. What news, rascal?

TOOL. What you desired me. When your husband eloped I was to give you timely notice, for which I was to receive £300.

LADY FUR. Is it come to this?

Enter GLOOM.

GLOOM. I have just learnt all. Oh, that mortal should witness such wholesale depravity! Oh, for the morals of society—and an Italian Opera dancer, too! If he had eloped with an honest servant wench, the descent into the bottomless pit of depravity would not have been so great; but, my Lady Furnace, I would offer some palliation in extenuation; you yourself are not free from blame. Why did you take Sir Fernando to the Opera? Why did you engage a box for the season, but to enable him to see a lot of foreign cattle exhibit

their antics in a state bordering on nudity: something very much resembling the real fleshings of nature; therefore, I say, take consolation to yourself—the temptations which you put before the weak-minded man's eyes were too great. If depravity progresses as it has, we shall shortly have *tableaux vivans*, and dancing girls exhibit in their own natural fleshings—nature undisguised. Oh, my Lady! blame not the idiot, for idiots, like wise men, are slaves to their instinct.

MOBELS. Fortunately, I am wide awake, or I might believe I was dreaming.

LADY FUR. Wretched woman!—has it come to this?

TOOL. It has indeed; therefore think of the value of my services. The small acknowledgment which you promised me is nothing in requital.

LADY FUR. I remember; you shall have your reward. See me again on to-morrow.

TOOL. Punctually. I will not fail. [Exit.]

LADY FUR. Now go. Daughter, will you retire with me? Brother, shall I speak with you presently?

[Exeunt LADY FURNACE and EDITH.]

MOBELS. A pretty business my weak-minded sister has made of it; however, good sometimes results from bad, and we will hope that nothing very disagreeable may follow as to Sir Fernando's indiscretion, for my part I augur low; good from it. My Lord, your servant for the present, I will return here shortly; in the meantime your suit is not quite so hopeless, now the main obstacle, Sir Fernando, is out of the way. Good day to you.

LORD PYERS. For the present, sir, farewell.

MOBELS. Good day. [Exeunt.]

Enter THORPE and PHILLIS.

THORPE. Why do you droop, fairest, and look so downcast?—you are now the wife of Thorpe, of Pogis.

PHILLIS. If you knew the cause of my sorrow—call it my shame—you would despise me.

THORPE. Never, my beauteous mistress! the love of Pogis is as lasting as his life.

PHILLIS. Suppose I was different to what I seem to be?—no lady; of little education; without a fortune; had nothing but a ready wit, and true devotion to my lord to recommend me; would you not then despise me?

THORPE. Could I do so? As well may the tide of the ocean vary, as the love of Pogis change,—know that the house of Pogis reverence their word, as an honest tradesman respects his credit. I have sworn to cherish you, through good and evil report, and I'll not swerve from the path of integrity, come what will.

PHILLIS. You have indeed sworn to cherish me! but when I shall tell you this is not my house; no longer my home,—and that I but yesterday was but a humble waiting woman, will you not think me infamous?—yet I could bear reproach better than your lost affection; for I do really love you—I could weep until my eyes ran blood, to think how I have deceived you. Oh, sir! can you love one who has duped you?—a common cheat.

THORPE. For speaking so candidly, I could love thee as if thou hadst been all thy life bred and born a lady—when thou confesses thyself a wrong doer, truth is justified. Tell me what thou really wast, and I'll forgive thee, nay more—love thee for thy truthfulness.

PHILLIS. Thus humble was I when you took me from

this house:—Edith Le Marchant's waiting woman. Sometimes she would say I was her friend, and her dear companion, and true enough our secrets we made mutual stock of; we passed our time merrily together, and often would she say, "Phillis, you are a girl above your present condition,—you are my friend, and not my servant." Can you forgive me?

THORPE. I am proud of my blood, it is true, I venerate my ancestry; but I regard my sacred word more than all; hence I love thy unsullied worth; and though thou art of base blood, thou hast a mind so pure, that puts thee on a level with all distinction.

PHILLIS. Can you, then, forgive me the cheat I have played upon you?

THORPE. Thou makest me forget everything except thy dear self—let me kiss thee, dear mistress.

Enter LORD PYERS and EDITH.

LORD PYERS. Who have we here?

EDITH. It is the knight whom I have assisted in getting a good wife. I will speak to the lady under the name she assumed. Good morning, Lady Thorpe, of Pogis; I must no longer call you Miss Le Merchant, judging from appearances; and you, Sir Thorpe, I wish you joy and happiness.

PHILLIS. I have explained all, and my dear kind husband has forgiven me; I am now truly happy, and could I, Miss Edith, see you as happy as I am—

EDITH. And why not? there is a chance for all,—wait awhile, and all will follow in its natural course.

Enter GLOOM and TOOL.

GLOOM. Come along, Tool,—you and I will be eternal friends; for I believe there is no man living more devoted to mischief than you are.

TOOL. Why, you see the state of society, the morals of the age, wont allow a man to go along the broad and straight road, so we must by compulsion take the narrow and crooked lanes and bye-paths; but you sees I never does wrong, but what I hopes to gain by it; and always does good when I can from choice, for the sake of the bettermost principles that regulates society. I am no amateur of mischief; I never broke a lamp or wrenched a knocker off in my life—what was the use on it? I got nothing by it; as for my cheating, I plays a very subordinate part in the drama of life; mine is an office not unfrequently practised without any shame attending it—that of prying into family affairs.

GLOOM. And by that means you knew Sir Fernando's intention to elope with the Opera dancer, of which you intended immediately informing Lady Furnace.

TOOL. Exactly so—when the exact time should arrive; where would have been my reward else? But here comes the new-married couple,—age and discomfiture; hollow charity with well-tempered duplicity.

Enter LADY HAVALL and LORD HOLLOW, R, and EDITH and LORD PYERS, L.

LADY HAV. Come along, ducky. [*Aside*] Eh! you are a poor devil.

EDITH. Good morning to your Ladyship, and you, Lord Hollow; I am glad you are come; all the grand

movers, the mal-plotters, are arrived or arriving—whose main object was to delude or be deluded—one or the other. Well, my Lady Havall, I wish you joy, and you, my Lord; it is true you would have married me; but I suppose you changed your mind, because—ah! do you guess?—I would not have you—

LADY HAV. Married, indeed; and a peer, too! What a magnificent expectation for a citizen's daughter to inflate her imagination with—what presumption! It is come to a pretty pass, when a chapman's daughter can aspire to a peer.

EDITH. Ha! ha! ha!—don't be angry, my dear Lady Havall. Pyers Gayton might have had you, no doubt, or some one else, only he would not—your Ladyship understands me; yet there are some poor noblemen can be very magnificent with a citizen's wealth; who, had they not married a citizen's daughter, must have lived in obscurity.

GLOOM. Her ladyship is silent on the subject. Well, my Lord Hollow, how do you like matrimony?

TOOL. And how does your Lordship like your bargain?—I can't help laughing.

LORD PYERS. Rascal, how dare you sneak into the parlour? Get out of the house, or remember the fate of the last rascal who was found prowling about a gentleman's house—if you do not go, a policeman will hand you out.

TOOL. I see I have no occupation here for the present, so I'll make myself an absentee as quick as possible—I'll allow my legs to make a retreat, so exit's the word. I'll wait outside for the remainder. *[Exit.]*

GLOOM. *[aside]* Perhaps, now Hollow's married, Edith

may be induced. [*To EDITH*] Miss Le Merchant, is there any further obstacle in the way?—may I hope?—my poor relations are every day growing more urgent, till actually my pockets are not safe.

EDITH. Mr. Gloom, I am truly sorry, but this fellow here is very much in your way [*pointing to LORD PYERS.*]

GLOOM. Then it appears that my poor relations' despair is not to be at its climax at present?

LADY HAV. Well, kinsman, if ever you should marry that pert miss, you shall not have a shilling of my money.

LORD PYERS. Only, my dear cousin, Havall, what you cannot help,—the whole of your property is settled, as you very well know; and if you die without offspring, it goes to me.

GLOOM. My Lord Hollow, how very unpleasant for a young man of your charitable pretensions to have to marry an old wife with only a life estate.

LORD HOL. Dear me, what a wicked old woman. I shall go mad—how very uncharitable, my Lady, of you to take me in so. Well may you say you would make no settlement; you could not. [*Cries.*]

LADY HAV. Fool! what are you wimpering at? exposing yourself to ridicule; have you not got me for a protector; is not that sufficient to satisfy you?

LORD HOL. No; not without money; I thought you were rich.

LADY HAV. So I am, as long as I live. What could I myself wish for more? I cannot carry my riches to the grave.

LORD HOL. But think of me, your Ladyship. What is to become of me after your death?

LADY HAV. Pooh! don't think of that. I shall out-live you. [*Aside to LORD HOLLOW*] Dr. Boloram has promised, and I have no doubt of it, that I shall live to be a hundred and fifty, Parr's age exactly; so you need not be alarmed.

LORD HOL. My Lady, you terrify me!

LADY HAV. What! you thought to get rid of me in a little time, did you?—but you will be disappointed.

GLOOM. Very much indeed; the prospect of a long life in an old wife is very terrific to a young husband, but if my prognostic should come to pass, we shall none of us live very long. And what is life worth if we are hourly in danger of being robbed? All men's hands are against rich men; and if you are poor, the least they can say of you is, you are a wretch who has an eye to other men's chattels; so between the both extremes there is no good in living, and existence is a curse. We have all an open affection for rich people, but, in reality, every one hates them.

EDITH. Our sex, Mr. Gloom, must envy the favoured lady that you intend to make happy; you won't suspect her; oh no, she will not covet your riches.

Enter DOCTOR BOLORAM.

Here comes a gentleman made great by others' credulity—the sovereign monarch of empiricism. Good morning, grave Doctor.

LADY HAV. Oh, the villain! Doctor, I say, return me my money; a pretty swindle, truly. Hast thou made me young and blooming? Give me back my money, I say.

DR. BOL. Be patient—wait a while—all in good time—what needs be, must follow.

LADY HAV. Ha! I perceive too late old age must follow after youth; therefore, I say, give me back my money.

DR. BOL. What money?—your Ladyship raves; you are in a high state of fever, and want bleeding.

LADY HAV. Bleeding, forsooth; you have bled me enough, in all conscience; did you not, knave, promise to make me young, and, in consideration thereof, did not I give you £5,000? Give me back my money, I say.

DR. BOL. It would be imprudent to add to superfluity; therefore, *non est inventus*; none is forthcoming; in other words—Never.

MOBELS. My lady, leave the impostor to his fate; and for the future be guided by a little common sense; that you have been cheated, you have only yourself to blame. If the Doctor has added a little to your delusion, you have only to charge it to your own credulity.

THORPE. Not so easy; I propose that he shall be dragged through London to the nearest horse-pond, if there is such a thing as water to be found in this dirty place, and then ducked until he is like a drowned witch, as penance for his lies. Only say the word, and I have a score grooms hard by shall do it.

DR. BOL. Do it. I defy you; the law will avenge me. [*The Doctor shakes his fist at THORPE.*]

THORPE. By Heavens, a threat! a battery must follow, then; take my horsewhip on thy shoulders! [*Flogs the Doctor.*]

DR. BOL. Spare me, spare me!

THORPE. Beg for mercy; or for a mother's son or devil I flea thee alive.

DR. BOL. I beg for mercy.

THORPE. On your knees.

DR. BOL. Here on my knees.

THORPE. You all saw the provocation.

ALL. All, all.

Enter LADY FURNACE.

LADY FUR. What noise is this? Gentlemen, I hoped you had spared my feelings; what is the meaning of it?

MOBELS. Nothing, sister; a little wholesome correction which the Knight has just inflicted on the Doctor.

LORD PYERS. My dear Lady Furnace, shall I speak with you? Come hither, Edith, love.

[LADY FURNACE, LORD PYERS, and EDITH
converse apart.]

LADY HAV. I am right glad the Doctor has got it; but the drubbing is not half enough for five thousand. Here, love (*to LORD HOLLOW*), provoke the Doctor to commit a breach of the peace; and then you drub him soundly.

LORD HOL. I am a man of peace.

LADY HAV. Another name for coward. Oh! that my last dear husband was alive; his Irish blood would have been up. Come along, spouse; we'll leave them. Ah! who have we here?

Enter LORD GAYTON.

GLOOM. Another disappointed member of society; who has been seeking after happiness, and has fell by mischance upon misery. Ah! my Lord, I am glad to see

you ; you have arrived opportunely, for I perceive two young people and the mamma are drawing up conditions.

LORD GAY. With my full approval, Edith le Merchant : I am no longer a bar to your happiness. Will Lady Furnace consent to make her child happy ?

LADY FUR. I am, my Lord, too miserable to wish to make others so. I say be happy, with all my heart.

MOBELS. One, two, three marriages, Mr. Gloom.

GLOOM. Three contrivances to bring more miserable wretches into the world ; they may increase misery, but cannot make the world more happy. Oh ! this wretched world of famished paupers that are ready to devour it.

MOBELS. They must have a pretty good appetite to devour the world ; it is rather too solid. The world, Mr. Gloom, is a good world ; a happy home, if we choose to make it so ; and when the morals of the age are well-regulated by sound principles of justice, and nature is properly consulted, all will go on well, as in a good comedy ; virtue will triumph, and vice will be abandoned to its fate ; true charity will then receive no check from hollow pretensions ; and empiricism will cease to be a delusion. I see around me two young friends that are likely to be shortly truly happy, as I have no doubt the Knight and his fair lady are so already ; and if this our little circle of players have afforded amusement to those walking in the midst of the great drama of life, why you will send us home happy in having afforded you good entertainment.

THE END.

CHAPMAN, KLOOATE, AND COMPANY, 5, SHOE-LANE, AND PETERBOROUGH-COURT,
FLEET-STREET.





